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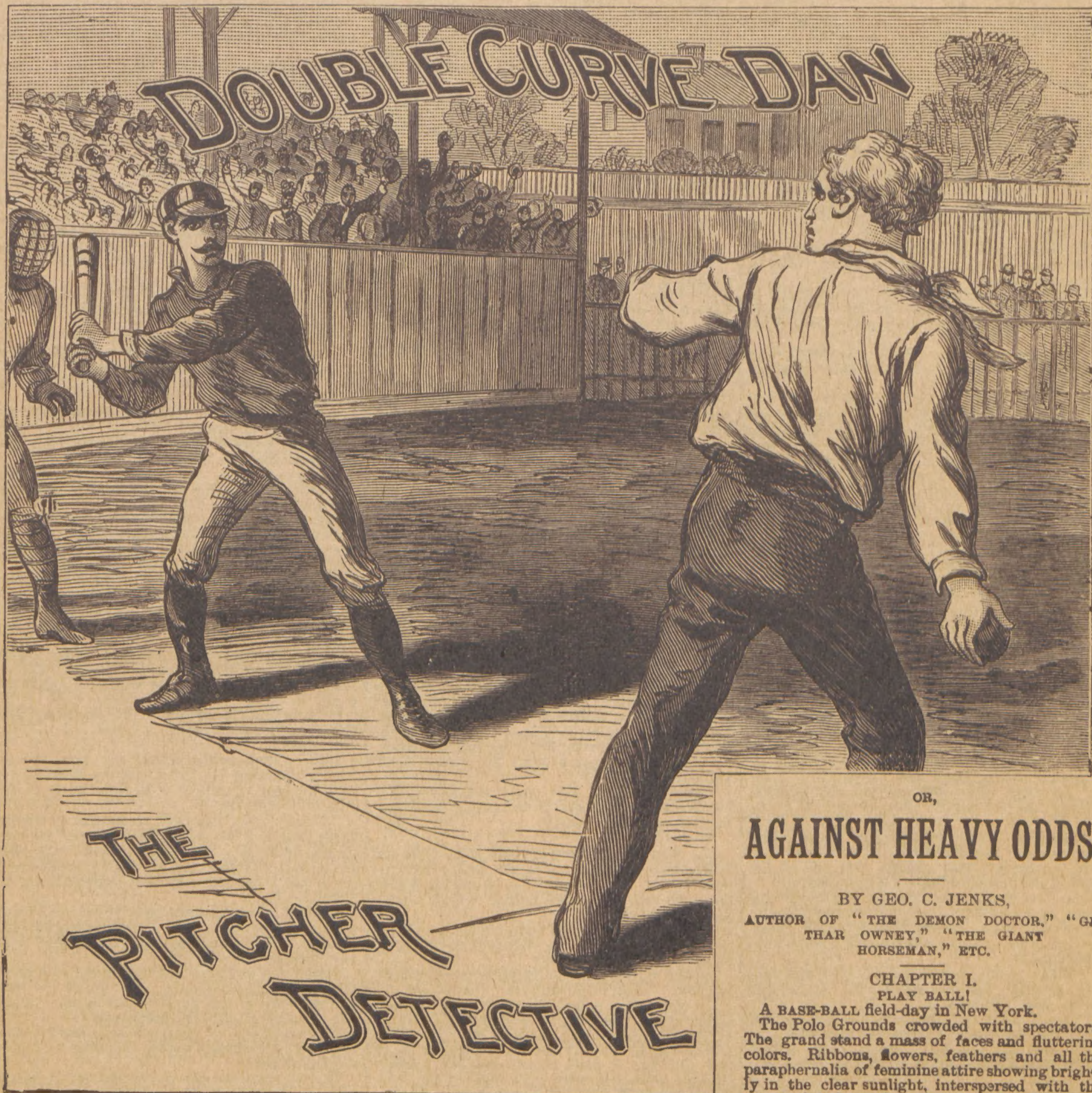
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OR,

AGAINST HEAVY ODDS.

BY GEO. C. JENKS,
AUTHOR OF "THE DEMON DOCTOR," "GIL
THAR OWNEY," "THE GIANT
HORSEMAN," ETC.

CHAPTER I. PLAY BALL!

A BASE-BALL field-day in New York.
The Polo Grounds crowded with spectators.
The grand stand a mass of faces and fluttering
colors. Ribbons, flowers, feathers and all the
paraphernalia of feminine attire showing bright-
ly in the clear sunlight, interspersed with the
more sedate hues of men's garments. Handker-
chiefs used liberally for wiping hot faces, and

DIME NOVELS
BOUGHT & SOLD
CHARLES BRAGIN
1525 W. 12th St.
Brooklyn 4, N. Y.

fans waving incessantly to assist the gentle summer breeze.

In the cheaper seats, where there is no protection from the sun, men and boys are packed closely, and are slowly cooking in the rays of Old Sol.

It is a pretty hot day for base-ball; but no one seems to think about the state of the weather. There is something else to interest them.

It is four o'clock in the afternoon, and time for the game to commence, but there is a delay.

The home club, the New Yorks, have no pitcher.

Wilfred Noel, the regular pitcher, has quarreled with the captain and has positively refused to play in to-day's game.

He is a man of strong passions, saturnine, gloomy and, in spite of his undoubted skill as a pitcher, unpopular with the other members of the club. He has suddenly taken it into his head that he does not want to play, and after a stormy scene with the captain, has taken a seat in the grand stand, where he can see what transpires in the field, without being easily seen himself.

What is to be done?

"Put on another pitcher!" howled the spectators. "Throw Noel in the river!"

The surly Wilfred scowls from his retired position in the grand stand.

The match is one of the most important in the season's series. The Boston slayers are the opponents, and the New Yorks must play their very strongest if they hope to beat the famous men from the Hub to-day.

The captain of the New Yorks looks helplessly around him. He has only one other pitcher on the ground, and his arm is in a precarious state, so his physician says. He could not deliver half a dozen balls without breaking down.

"It is no use, boys; we must either let Jack Swift pitch, and take chances on his arm, or we must forfeit the game," the captain informs his men, as they gather around him in a corner of the field.

The Bostonians are standing in a group at a little distance, waiting for the New Yorks to make some move.

With true American generosity they share in the annoyance and disappointment of their adversaries, and would, if they could, help them out.

This, however, seems to be impossible, and they can only wait for some decision to be given by the umpire.

That important personage, a very tall individual, with broad shoulders and a determined visage, who has himself been a noted pitcher in his day, steps up to the captain and tells him that he must make up his mind right away, because the game will be called. If the New Yorks are not prepared, they must pay the usual forfeit; the audience will be dismissed, and their money returned to them.

The vast assemblage, which has quieted down during the short conference between the umpire and captain, breaks out into fresh yells of impatience.

The situation is a desperate one.

A base-ball audience will not stand much trifling, or tolerate indecision.

Jack Swift, the "change pitcher," feels his arm with his left hand, and looks dubious. If his captain orders him to the front he will do his best, but he feels that it means certain defeat for his club.

"Jack, you must do it," finally decides the captain. "It is the only thing we can do. Our other pitchers, Will Knox and Al Cratty, are both down-town somewhere, and it would be impossible to find them now."

"All right, Cap; just as you say," is Jack Swift's brave reply. "Let us get into the field."

The crowd cheers as the "boys" get to their places around the diamond.

It is Boston's first innings, and one of the Hub's most powerful batters goes to the bat.

The New Yorks take the field and cover the bases, as Jack Swift slowly leaves the players' bench and walks hesitatingly forward. Then he stops, and grasps his arm with a slight exclamation.

"What is the matter, Jack?" asks the captain, quickly. He has seen the movement, and knows that it bodes evil.

"Cap, I'm afraid I cannot go in. I'm certain when I do that curve of mine my arm will give right out, and the only delivery I have is that curve, and it is no use my trying to pitch any other way."

And still Noel stands in his corner in the grand stand grinning sardonically. He had meant to stop the game if he could, and he sees

that he will be successful. What his reason was for causing trouble we shall soon discover.

"Mr. Keane," says the captain to the umpire, "we cannot play. I would rather not attempt it than go in for certain defeat. The New Yorks have done well so far this season, and I know that we could win to-day if we had Noel to pitch. Without him we should be lost."

"Couldn't you make him play?" inquires the umpire, clinching his fist. "I think I could induce him to do it."

"You don't know him, or you wouldn't say that. He is the worst man to handle I ever saw. If it were not that he is one of the best pitchers in the country he would not have stayed in the club as long as he has."

"He would soon go out of it, if I was manager, or captain, either," muttered the umpire, grimly, "no matter how well he plays. Well, it is no use talking any more. I'll announce to the crowd that there will be no game, and that their money will be refunded as they pass out."

The players in the field are throwing the ball from one to the other waiting for the pitcher, and are unaware of the new turn of affairs.

The umpire walks a little toward the grand stand, and in stentorian tones commences:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I regret to say that there will be no game to-day. Owing to the sudden illness of Wilfred Noel, the regular pitcher of the New York Club, it is impossible to proceed—"

The umpire's voice is drowned by the yells and execrations of the men and boys in the low-priced seats.

It would go hard with Noel were he to show himself now. He knows that, for he draws a little more behind the post that conceals him, though he never abates his ugly smile.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I assure you—" resumes the umpire.

"Play ball!" "Where is Noel?" "Pitch yourself!" "Bring on Jack Swift!" howls the mob.

"Gentlemen!" cries the umpire, at the top of his voice.

The crowd, disappointed in their hopes of witnessing a splendid game, are fairly wild. The umpire sees an ominous swaying in the vast concourse, and knows that, in another minute, there will be three thousand men and boys swarming over the field, ready to deal destruction to everybody and everything connected with the two base-ball clubs.

The noise is terrific! Ladies are fainting in the grand stand, while their escorts, maddened with excitement, stop their own yelling with an effort, and do what they can to assist their companions.

Suddenly a clear, youthful voice rings out above the din:

"I will pitch the game!"

There is a cessation of the noise as every one turns to look at the speaker.

A young fellow of twenty or thereabouts is making his way rapidly down over the seats in the grand stand. He clears the board fence that protects the spectators from stray balls, and drops easily to the ground in the inclosure.

"I'll pitch the game!" he repeats, as he strolls carelessly, but with every movement denoting strength and activity, toward the umpire.

The crowd has settled back into the seats, and takes a good look at the young man. They see a lithe, stalwart form, a boyish face, clear blue eyes, and a wealth of auburn curls clustering around a well-shaped head. The head is uncovered, for the owner holds his soft felt hat in his hand, as he turns toward the grand stand and bows laughingly.

"Can you pitch this game so that the New Yorks stand a chance of winning?" asks the captain, somewhat dubiously.

"I can."

The answer is given confidently, but without any tinge of egotism. It is the simple declaration of one who knows what he can do, and is not to be deterred from telling of it by a false sense of modesty.

"What is your name?" inquires the umpire.

"They call me, in the village I come from, Double-Curve Dan, but—"

"That is enough!" interposes the captain, quickly. "Let it go at that. I don't want to know your other name, if you have one, or anything about you. Go in and pitch this game. I feel, somehow, that we will win, and that Double-Curve Dan is the best name for me to call you by. I don't know why, but I know that the name will bring good luck to the New Yorks to-day."

"A little superstitious, eh?" observes the umpire, with a smile.

"Perhaps!" is the captain's quiet reply.

"Everybody in the field!" proclaims the umpire.

Double-Curve Dan throws off his coat and vest, and appears in a neat white flannel shirt, laced with a blue cord and tassels. A white silk handkerchief is knotted loosely around his throat.

He strolls easily toward the diamond and is introduced by the captain to the catcher, Lionel Lacey.

"I don't think you will be very long getting onto my delivery," says Dan. "It is not very fast, and I believe I am easy to catch. But I shall fool the batter, so look sharp when I get in my work."

"I'll do that," is Lionel's reply, as he grasps the hand of the other heartily, for he had taken a strong fancy to the handsome young stranger. Perhaps because Lionel Lacey is young and handsome himself, and "like begets like."

Dan takes his position in the pitcher's box, and looks steadily at each of the players in turn. He wants to see what material he has to support him.

The inspection is apparently satisfactory, for there is a smile curving his lip, as he settles himself in his favorite position for delivering the ball.

"Play ball!" cries the umpire.

Every member of the vast audience settles himself in his seat to enjoy the game—all, save one.

Wilfred Noel, standing behind his post, has his eyes fixed in a stare of malevolent hate upon the face of the young pitcher, and the stare means mischief.

"Play ball!"

Double-Curve Dan does not see Noel. His eyes are upon the batter, who stands impatiently awaiting the first ball from the new pitcher.

For a few seconds Dan stands rigid, with the ball tightly gripped in his fingers. Then, with a peculiar round-arm movement, he lets it go. It flies straight as an arrow for about half the distance; then it takes a sudden twist to the right, and again another to the left!

The batter tries to meet it, but it zigzags past him, and drops into the hands of Lionel Lacey.

"One strike!" cries the umpire.

Another double-curve ball is delivered by the young pitcher, and then the spectators and players begin to understand how he acquired his sobriquet.

A minute more and the big batter of the Bostons is "out on strikes."

A roar arises from the audience. The unknown pitcher is a terror!

The game goes on. It is impossible for the Bostons to hit Dan's balls, and victory points in the direction of the New Yorks.

Not by any great odds, however, for the Bostons are playing a splendid game; and now, in the ninth innings, the score stands 2 to 0 against them, with the Bostons going to the bat.

The sun is not so powerful as it was at the beginning of the game, for a bank of fleecy clouds has blown across the sky, tempering the sun's rays and rendering the atmosphere delightful.

Noel, standing behind his post in the grand stand, has seen the triumph of Double-Curve Dan with a feeling of rage which he cannot repress.

"Curse him!" he mutters. "This is not the first time he has crossed my path. I will fix him yet."

He sees that the zigzag balls are still bothering the opposing club, and that the New Yorks have an easy victory in store, due solely to the skill of the pitcher.

"If they could only get to hit one or two of those balls, the tale might be different," he continues, as he sees that the Bostons' very best batter is facing the pitcher, waiting cautiously for a ball that he may have some chance of hitting.

One of those tantalizing twisted deliveries is sent in, and the batter is wise enough to decline it. He is not going out "on strikes" this time if he can help it.

Double-Curve Dan is as fresh and lively as at the beginning of the game. He wears his soft hat rakishly at the back of his head, and his auburn curls glint in the fitful sunlight.

Noel is obliged to acknowledge that the new pitcher is a handsome young fellow as well as a skillful player.

There is some one else too, in the grand stand, who realizes these facts, and whose evident admiration for the young stranger makes Noel grit his teeth as he observes it.

This some one else is a fair young girl, who in daintiest of summer costumes, looks inexpressibly cool and bewitching as she intently watches every movement of the pitcher.

Noel directs his attention between her and the game; but she, after bestowing upon him the coolest of nods at the beginning of the playing, thus showing that she knows him, has not noticed him since. He is evidently not one of her favorites.

By her side sits a merry-faced lad of about seventeen. He is enough like her to be easily recognized as her brother, even if her careless reliance upon him for explanations of knotty points in the game did not indicate their relationship.

"They must not win that game! They shall not, if I can help it!" hisses Noel under his breath. "That fellow is not going to get ahead of me always. I don't like the way he looked up at—at—Ada just now, either."

A great roar arises from the multitude around him.

The big batter of the Bostons has at last managed to hit Double-Curve Dan. He has sent the ball flying into right field, and owing to a fumble by a New York player, has made a home run.

Two more Boston men fail to hit the ball, but get on bases.

The gloomy young man behind the post in the grand stand grinds his teeth.

Another batter goes in for the Boston's, and Double Curve Dan prepares with more care than usual to put in one of his most difficult balls.

The batter is one of the quickest men in the Boston team, and has all along come nearer to hitting Double-Curve's delivery than any one else.

Now that the pitcher is a little nervous by the unexpected success of the big batter, the Bostons are more hopeful than ever.

Dan poises the ball, and with a lightning movement sends it zigzagging toward the home plate, just as a bright ray of sunlight strikes him full in the eyes, and makes his delivery uncertain.

But for that ray of light the ball could never have been touched by the batter. It was just enough to spoil the throw, and, with a thud, the bat strikes the ball and sends it again flying into right field, over the head of the fielder who fumbled the previous ball.

A home run!

Round the bases flies the batman. There were two men on bases, and both are in!

Quick with that ball!

The right-fielder does not fumble this time, but sends the ball plump into the hands of the pitcher.

The batsman is rushing from third base, and Dan summons his strength to send the ball to home plate, and thus put him out.

Just at the critical moment, as the ball leaves his hand, that flash of sunlight again blinds him, and the ball goes wide of the mark, allowing the Bostonian to make his run.

"What is the matter with you?" demands the captain, angrily.

Double-Curve Dan points to the grand stand, where, half-concealed by a post, is Wilfred Noel, with a piece of looking-glass in his hand!

"That is what is the matter with me," says Dan, quietly.

Even as he speaks, the vast multitude in the cheaper seats see through the treacherous trick of Noel, and, with a wild roar, rush toward him, as if they would rend him limb from limb.

CHAPTER II.

THE MURDER.

It was a dangerous moment for the dastard, Noel.

Not a vestige of mercy could be traced in the faces of any of the maddened creatures that were rushing toward the grand stand.

The treacherous act that had lost the game for the home team, in spite of the wonderful skill of the strange pitcher, must be punished, surely and promptly.

The young man who was the object of their wrath gazed at the crowd for a moment with a contemptuous sneer, and then, as the foremost of them scrambled over the fence into the grand stand, he turned, and, with a mocking wave of his hand, disappeared.

With a howl, they were after him; but, too late. A small stairway, not generally open to the public, had enabled him to elude his pursuers, for a time at least.

The young girl to whom he had referred as Ada, turned a terrified glance in his direction, and half-arose from her seat, as he vanished down the stairway.

"Sit still, Ada!" said her brother. "They won't hurt you, and I'm sure you don't care for that skunk. Let him go, and I only hope they will catch him and give him what he deserves."

"Yes, I know he has done a mean thing, but—"

"But—nothing, Ada. You are too soft-hearted."

The young fellow was thoroughly disgusted with Noel. He could not see any good in a man who would deliberately betray his own ball team.

The crowd saw that their prey had escaped them, and they gradually settled back into their places to see the end of the game.

Double-Curve Dan did his best, but the odds were too great now, in the ninth inning, and the score at the conclusion of the game stood 4 to 2 for the Bostons.

The spectators poured out of the big exit gates, talking about the game and discussing different points of play made during the afternoon.

The young pitcher walked wearily across the diamond and threw himself upon the players' bench.

"Well, Dan, they managed to knock us out, eh?"

The speaker was Lionel Lacey. He patted Double-Curve Dan on the shoulder as he spoke.

"Yes, I am sorry, too," returned Dan. "I believe we could have won but for—"

"But for that dirty trick of Wilfred Noel's. Yes, we could," joined in the captain of the New Yorks, as he walked up to the two.

"I suppose he will be bounced now, sure, Cap?" asked Lacey.

"No."

"No? Why not?"

"Well," hesitatingly, "he is a good pitcher, for one thing."

"What is the good of that, when you can't depend upon him? Besides he isn't as good as—"

Double-Curve Dan looked up quickly.

"My name is Daniel Manly, though, as I told you, I have been called Double-Curve Dan up in Albany."

"Daniel Manly! A good name for you, too, if I am any judge," declared Lionel, heartily.

"Thanks!"

"No, we cannot afford to release Wilfred Noel, though I suppose we shall have to fine him," said the captain, reverting to the original subject of conversation.

"I should think he would be ashamed to show his face among the boys again," cried Lionel. "I would go and bury myself in a mud-bank if I had done such a sneaking trick as that."

"Oh, you would, eh?"

A soft, persuasive voice sounded in Lionel's very ear, and turning quickly, he looked into the dark, cruel eyes of Wilfred Noel.

"You think it was a sneaking trick, eh? Mind I don't do some other trick that will be rather painful to you. I don't allow boys to criticise my actions."

The sneering smile habitual to him played across Noel's features, showing his white teeth like the snarl of a beast of prey.

Lionel Lacey was about to make a sharp reply, which would undoubtedly have led to a violent scene then and there, but a look from Dan Manly restrained him. Somehow this handsome young stranger could throw a great deal of expression into his soft blue eyes—expression that conveyed command as surely as spoken words.

"Haven't I met you before?" demanded Noel, abruptly of Dan.

The latter looked coldly at his questioner.

"Possibly."

"I thought so. Where was it—in Albany?"

"In Albany."

"Well, you played a pretty good game today. Allow me to congratulate you."

Wilfred Noel put out his hand, but Dan ignored it, and, with the single word, "Thanks!" turned his back on the other.

"Curse you! I will be even with you yet," muttered Noel, walking away. "You cannot always be on top, surely. I blocked your game to-day. That is a comfort, anyhow."

What was the reason that the dark-visaged young man was such a bitter enemy of Double-Curve Dan?

Was it only because the stranger had come here and shown a skill in the pitcher's box that put Noel in the shade, or was there another and greater reason?

We shall see.

Richard, or Dick Worth, captain of the New Yorks, saw the little episode between the two pitchers and shook his head gravely. He knew the vengeful nature of Wilfred Noel.

"You want to look out for that man, Dan," he said. "He's dangerous."

"So am I, when it is worth while," was the careless response.

"Bully for you, old man! I like that talk," joined in Lionel Lacey.

But, Double-Curve Dan did not hear him. His gaze was fixed on an object that was evidently more interesting than anything else.

Lacey followed the direction of Dan's eyes, and was at once almost as much interested as the new pitcher.

"Whew! Ain't she a corker?" he muttered under his breath. "Coming right over here, too."

Coming across the ball-ground was a young girl, Ada Hetherington—she upon whom Wilfred's gaze had been fixed as he stood behind the post in the grand stand. Her fair cheek was flushed with excitement as she walked quickly toward the group consisting of Double-Curve Dan, Lionel Lacey and Dick Worth, the captain.

Half-way across the ground from the grand stand she passed Wilfred Noel, but she acknowledged his bow with only the slightest nod of her pretty head, heedless of the fact that he was muttering curses upon everybody and ever thing as he saw himself treated with silent disdain.

"Mr. Manly, I felt that I must come and speak to you," she burst out, as she held out her hand.

Double-Curve Dan took it respectfully and bowed.

"You played such a splendid game," she continued, "and made sure we should win. I knew it was not your fault that the nasty Boston club beat us."

Miss Ada was very loyal to the home team, and could not say anything too cruel of its opponents.

"The Bostons played a good game, Miss Hetherington," said the young pitcher, gravely, "and fully deserved their victory. I am not disposed to consider them 'nasty' because I played on the losing side."

"No, no, of course not," she returned, hastily. "I did not mean that. But I do wish that we had won."

"Better luck next time!" put in Lacey, unable to contain himself longer.

Dan Manly introduced the young fellow and Dick Worth to the girl, as a concession to the rules of common politeness, though he felt that perhaps he was somewhat overstepping the bounds of social requirements in doing so.

"Mr. Manly, my father would be pleased to see you, I know. Could you not call at the house this evening?"

Double-Curve Dan's face flushed with pleasure, and Lacey looked as if he would have given a great deal to be included in the invitation.

"I—I shall be only too happy to come," he answered.

"Then here is our address. I know papa wants to see you, for he was talking about you only this morning. Though, of course, he did not know you were in New York."

"Ada!" rung out her brother's voice, and that young gentleman, somewhat disturbed over losing his sister, hove in sight across the ball-ground.

"I am coming, Bob!" cried his sister, and with a graceful bow to the three young men, she walked away and disappeared with Bob through the exit gateway.

Something caused Double-Curve Dan to hasten after her, and she was still just outside the gate when he caught her.

He had hardly time to note that Wilfred Noel was blocking her path, and that the girl was trying in vain to pass, when the former turned savagely on him and demanded:

"What are you following this young lady for?"

"What are you interfering with her for?" was Dan Manly's quick retort.

"I am not answerable to you!"

"No, but you are to me," put in Bob, as he gave Noel an angry push.

In a second, all the fierce passions of the dark-browed young man were aflame, and he sprang upon the boy with murder in his heart.

His hand was upraised, and Dan Manly saw that a knife glittered in the sunlight.

"None of that!" cried Dan. "What are you doing?"

He grasped Noel's wrist, and for a moment the two struggled desperately.

Both were about equal in strength, but Wilfred had the advantage of being fresh, while Dan felt the fatigue induced by his exertions in the game.

Each had the other by the throat with one hand. In his right Noel held a cruel dirk knife, while Dan grasped the wrist to prevent the weapon being used.

Ada Hetherington covered her eyes with her hands to shut out the deadly struggle. She knew the murderous nature of Wilfred Noel, and she feared for the life of the young fellow with the blue eyes which had looked into hers with an expression that no maiden could mistake. Dan Manly loved her and she knew it.

"Let go of my wrist and I'll send you to perdition," hissed Noel, scarcely knowing what he said in his anger-insanity.

"Not much!" was Double-Curve Dan's reply, breathless as he felt that his strength was giving out. The ball game had been a tremendous strain upon him—even more than he knew.

Bob Hetherington was dancing around the combatants, anxious to help Dan in some way, but unable to do so, so quick were their movements.

At last, with a mighty effort, Noel released his knife-hand from the young pitcher's grasp.

For an instant, the knife flashed in the air.

Ada screamed, and Bob rushing forward threw himself between the struggling men.

Fatal movement!

The lad received the blow and the tragedy was completed.

For a second all stood spell-bound. Then Noel bounded away, and dashing around the corner was gone.

The escape of the murderer aroused Dan to action. He sped after the fugitive but soon returned. Noel had but escaped for the time-being. He would soon enough be in the law's grasp.

As the physician who chanced to be present in the throng announced that the bright young lad was indeed dead, Ada Hetherington arose from the body, where she had thrown herself in the first transports of her grief, and raising her hand said, with almost awful solemnity:

"Heaven hear me! I will devote my life to hunting down my brother's murderer!"

The gathered crowd stood back in silent respect for her grief, and to her fervent oath, many responded a heartfelt "amen!"

Double-Curve Dan, who had come back unobserved by her, took her hand in his, and added earnestly:

"And Dan Manly will help you to the end."

She pressed his hand gently, and Double-Curve Dan felt that he had entered her service for life or death.

CHAPTER III.

THE GUEST OF CHROMO CASTLE.

DOWN on the docks along the East River there was a queer retreat.

It was a large room under the wharf whereon big bales of cotton, hogsheds and miscellaneous freight pertaining to the business of a wholesale dealer in southern productions were constantly stored.

The room was not the sort of place into which a stranger would come to venture even if he could find his way to it. Built on scantlings nailed across the piles that supported the wharf, it waved backward and forward as the tide surged against the heavy timbers, and gave its occupants the sensation of being on ship-board.

What light it got in the daytime was derived from a small window facing the river, that was always carefully shuttered both inside and outside before a lamp was lighted within.

But few persons were in the secret of the room's existence, and they were sworn not to reveal it to any one else.

There were several means of reaching this place, all of them being carefully veiled, and so arranged that no one suspected their real character.

The door of the room was on the side away from the river, so that when it was opened people passing along in boats would not get even a glimpse of the apartment.

It was night; the room was carefully secured, both window and door being fastened, and not a sound could be heard save the whistling of the wind among the piles and the angry lapping of the waves against the rotting timbers.

The old shanty rocked more than usual, for it was a wild night, though in the middle of summer.

A brazier, with a coke fire in it, stood in the center of the room, the gas escaping by a pipe through the wall.

Hanging over the fire, though the atmosphere of the place was absolutely stifling, was an old woman.

Not old in years, for probably her age was

not more than half-way between thirty and forty, but a constant struggle with poverty and an acquaintance with the shady side of life from her cradle upward, had hardened and wrinkled her features and put gray hairs into her head long before the proper time.

She held her long, thin fingers over the brazier, and slowly rubbed her hands together, as she muttered:

"How the old place shakes! Shouldn't be surprised if it was to break down completely and tumble into the river. Well, and a good job if I went with it! That would be an end of all my troubles at one plunge."

She rocked herself to and fro on the low stool upon which she sat, and continued her soliloquy:

"Wonder where the boys are? It is terribly lonesome here to-night!"

A blinding flash of lightning—so powerful that it penetrated even into the interior of the shanty, seeming to come through the solid walls, for its occupant would have declared there were no chinks—startled the woman.

Almost simultaneously the thunder rattled among the piles with a tearing sound, as if uprooting the very bed of the river, then settling down into a sullen roar and finally dying grumbly away.

"My! What a night! Mag Mullins, you would be in pretty shape if this old place was to be struck by lightning! I wouldn't so much mind being drowned, but I never fancied lightning—or thunder!"

Another flash and another, with an accompaniment of thunder grand enough to awe people sitting in solid brick houses, with plenty of friends near by to help them keep up their courage. To this lonely woman, cowering in a crazy shanty, it was like the crack of doom.

Now the rain, that had apparently been waiting until its electrical advance guard had time enough to announce its coming, came down in a solid sheet. It pattered on the wharf over the shanty for a few seconds, and then came through the numberless holes in the boards in streams that seemed as if they would wash the shanty into the river.

"Ah! You may rain!" muttered Mag, apostrophizing the elements. "I ain't afraid of rain. The roof of the old house is solid enough, and the water can't get through. But the lightning—Ah! Who's that?"

The old woman, who had been crooning over the fire, had jumped up and was standing in the corner furthest removed from the door, with a heavy iron bar in her hand.

Her quick ear had detected a sound that was not caused by the wind or rain.

A knock at the door!

She poised the iron bar in her hand ready to brain any intruder and bit her tongue in anger with herself that she had been surprised into speaking in answer to the knock.

Another knock—feeble and hesitating but still unmistakable.

She stood still, hardly breathing, though the storm was at its height and she might have made a great deal of noise without any one outside being the wiser.

Still another knock, and then a voice—a man's voice, strange to her:

"Open the door, in mercy's name!"

She did not answer, only gripped her heavy iron bar the tighter.

"Will you open this door? I must get in. If you don't open I'll batter it down!"

A sneer curled the lip of Mag Mullins as she listened to this threat. She knew that it would take more strength than that possessed by one man, unless he were provided with a sledgehammer and a crowbar. This stranger, whose voice indicated anything but excessive vigor, was not much to be feared.

"You just stand out there and knock, and I'll take a look at you in the mean time," muttered the hag, as she walked leisurely across the floor to what looked like a small cupboard near the door.

The cupboard was locked, but she drew a Yale key from her pocket, and in a second had the door wide open.

The impatient knocking continued outside, and the voice of the visitor had changed from threatening to pleading again.

"Let me in. You need not be afraid. I'm all square, and I'll pay well for my lodging."

"Must think we keep a boarding-house or hotel," was Mag's inaudible comment, as she stepped inside the cupboard.

The contents of the cupboard were not like those of ordinary places of the kind.

There were no cups, saucers, dishes or cooking-utensils, nor indeed anything to indicate

that it was the storehouse for belongings of a thrifty housekeeper. It was entirely empty, save that a ladder fastened to the wall gave perpendicular access to a gloomy cavernous place above.

Mag Mullins entered the cupboard and closed it after her, the spring-lock having a handle inside by which she could release herself.

The thunder, lightning and rain continued as furiously as ever, and still the stranger knocked at the door persistently, as if determined to get in at whatever expenditure of time and patience.

The old woman, though in pitch darkness, climbed the ladder without hesitation, and put her head into the black hole above the ceiling.

Then she leaned cautiously forward over the crazy rafters and opened a small trap in the wall.

Putting her head through she was able to look down immediately upon the person outside the door.

He was standing on two planks that formed a bridge from a dark passage that ran between the piles and under the wharf for miles perhaps, for anything that showed to the contrary.

This was one of the means of approach to Chromo Castle, as its owners had christened it, with grim facetiousness.

Beneath the two creaking planks the river boiled and surged like an angry thing, and seemed as if it would tear into its bosom every living being that ventured within its sound.

The rain streaming through the interstices of the wharf had made the planks so slippery that they formed but a precarious footing, and the stranger held desperately to the rude handle on the door of the shanty.

He was a young man, and his clothes though now stained with mud and rain, and torn in many places, were well-made and of good material.

"Swell in trouble, for a dollar" thought Mag. "Well, I can't help it. We don't want to have the police hunting around until they drop on this crib. Chromo Castle is an exclusive residence, and we want to keep it so."

She was just about to withdraw her head and close the trap, more especially as the rain was no respecter of persons and was pouring uncomfortably on the back of her neck when her ear caught a slight sound in the dark passage under the wharf.

"Hello! What's that?" she muttered. "Some of the boys, I suppose."

A shaft of white light shone from the interior of the passage upon the wet boards of the plank bridge, adding but a feeble gleam to the continuous play of the lightning, however, and then the sound of footsteps was plainly audible to her.

She ran rapidly down the ladder and feeling in a corner of the cupboard in the darkness, grasped an ordinary thread-spool that hung to a piece of wire. She gave the spool a sharp tug, and then climbed up the ladder again, so that she could look through the opening in the wall.

The spool and the wire conveyed a signal to the person in the passage that all was right, and he came carefully forward.

As he appeared at the opening of the passage and placed one foot on the crazy wooden bridge, he showed himself to be a man of almost gigantic proportions. Over six feet in height, his broad shoulders and brawny arms indicated the strength of an ox, while his easy movements and slight swagger betokened the athlete and bully.

His clothes were of the Bowery cut, and, notwithstanding that it was the month of June, he wore an imitation sealskin cap upon his bullet-shaped head.

"Hallo! Who are you?" he growled, as a flash of lightning revealed the young man clinging to the handle of the door, apparently in a state of utter exhaustion. "What are you doing?"

He took a bull's-eye lantern from under his coat and turned its rays upon the stranger.

"I want shelter. I am all right. I can soon prove that to you. If I don't, why—there's the river!"

"That's so, by Caesar!" acquiesced the big man. "If you were dumped in here to-night you would just go quietly out with the tide before daylight, and make a meal for a shark out beyond Sandy Hook before your folks had time to miss you."

The humor of this remark struck Mag Mullins so forcibly that she uttered a chuckle from her place of observation.

"That means ten cents fine for you, old woman," said the big man, looking up quickly. "You know the rules of Chromo Castle."

"Well, you needn't be so durned sharp, Billy,"

was her retort. "I knew it was all right or I wouldn't have shown myself. Still, if the club wants to fine me the ten cents they can take it out of my wages, an' I guess I can stand it."

"Quit yer gassing an' come down an' let me in. We'll take this rooster in an' see what he has to say for himself, anyhow. If we don't like his style, why we can just give him a cold bath, after we have cut his neck, an' that'll end it."

Mag hurried down, securely fastening the little door in the wall first, and shutting the cupboard by its spring lock as she left it. A heavy iron bar and three bolts secured the door of the castle, which was made of two thicknesses of oak, studded with large iron rivets at regular intervals all over it.

The hag's nimble fingers soon shot back the bolts and removed the bar.

She flung the door wide open and the young man staggered in, closely followed by the big man, who was known to the associates as Billy the Buffer.

The latter assisted Mag in fastening the door and then turned to look at the stranger who had thus, under such peculiar circumstances, found his way into Chromo Castle.

The young man had fallen on the floor in a deadly faint, his face looking like that of a corpse in the dim light of Mrs. Mullins's coal-oil lamp.

Billy the Buffer turned his bull's-eye on the unconscious features.

One glance and he started back in amazement. "By the great horn spoon, it is Wilfred Noel, the pitcher who wouldn't play the game to-day!"

CHAPTER IV.

IN HIDING.

BILLY THE BUFFER stood for a moment looking down at Wilfred Noel with anything but a favorable expression.

He could have forgiven crimes of the ordinary kind, such as burglary or arson, but a man who would deliberately betray his ball club was almost beyond the pale of mercy.

"I've a good mind to give him one," he muttered as he drew a bowie-knife from its sheath up his left sleeve and felt its point caressingly with his fingers.

"What's the matter, Billy?" interrupted the old woman. "You are not going to cut him before you know what he is here for, and without giving him a little show, are you?"

"None of yer durned business," was the surly reply. "I tell yer I saw this duck leave the field to-day an' go an' hide himself in the grand stand when he ought ter have been in the pitcher's box."

"What of that? If he didn't want to play I don't blame him for not doing it. I wouldn't have done it myself."

Billy the Buffer looked contemptuously at Mag.

"Of course. What do women know about base-ball, anyhow? But we'll hear what he has to say, if he ever wakes up."

Here he gave the prostrate figure a vicious kick.

"What's—the—matter?" feebly murmured Wilfred, as he slightly turned.

"Why you're a—"

"Hold on, Billy. You needn't be so fresh," interrupted the hag, as she knelt down by the side of the young man.

The burly ruffian drew back his foot as if to kick her with his heavy boot, but thought better of it, and, putting his hands in his pockets, stood regarding her in sullen silence.

She went to a small trunk that stood in a distant corner, and unlocking it drew forth a bottle of brandy which she placed to the mouth of Wilfred Noel.

The effect of the treatment was soon apparent, for he sat up on the floor, and in a few minutes was able to arise and seat himself upon the stool near the brasier.

The storm had by this time subsided to a considerable extent, though occasional mutterings of thunder could be heard, while the rain had almost entirely ceased.

"You are sure that door is secure, are you not?" asked the young man, as he looked wildly from the old woman to her companion.

"Course it is. What's the matter with yer?" demanded Billy. "Now, just tell us what you mean by disturbing respectable people late at night, like this, or I'll fire you into our back yard."

"Back yard?"

"He means the river," explained Mag.

"Oh!"

"Hal hal ha!" laughed Billy the Buffer.

"I told you when I first came to the door that

I was square, and I am," said Wilfred Noel, with a curl of his lip.

"Prove it."

"I will. Come forward."

Billy the Buffer and Mag Mullins stepped in front of the young man, as he crossed his arms and taking the man's right hand and the woman's left, pressed them in a peculiar manner.

The Buffer started back in amazement.

"Why didn't you give us the grip before? I hadn't any idee—"

"Of course you hadn't. But you know it is one of the rules of the Order not to use its grips, signs or passwords save when absolutely necessary."

"Seems to me that it was necessary for you to do it when you were standing out there hardly able to keep yourself from dropping into the river," remarked Mag.

"No, because I knew that some of the boys would be along before many minutes had passed, and I could afford to wait."

"Why did you try so hard to make me let you in, then, when you hadn't any password on your lips, or a sign to give me?"

"I just wanted to test you, for one thing!"

"You can test all you've a mind to, but you'll never catch Mag Mullins going back on her oath, now, I tell you."

The old woman bridled up as she spoke. Wilfred Noel had touched her on a very tender spot, for above all things did she pride herself on her loyalty to the society of thieves and murderous rascals that had its New York headquarters in Chromo Castle.

"That's all right, Mag. You didn't open the door, an' no damage was done. Pity you can't keep your mouth shut as well as the door," grunted Billy.

"Bill Cranch, I don't want none of your slurs," retorted the woman, sharply. "You just tend to your business, an' let me alone."

"Oh, well, you needn't get mad. I didn't mean nothin'. Only a little fun."

"Billy the Buffer or Bill Cranch, as Mag had called him spoke apologetically. Big as he was, he did not care to provoke the virago too far.

"Well, I don't like your fun, so stop it," she said, as she brought forth a coffee-pot from somewhere and put it on top of the coke fire.

Wilfred Noel was shivering in his wet clothes and was keeping as closer to the brasier as possible.

"How are things in Albany with the boys?" asked Bill, looking curiously at the young man.

"Still."

"Nothing doing, eh?"

"No, but there are one or two plants nearly ready. I suppose they will be worked in the course of a month or two?"

"Banks?"

Wilfred nodded.

"Much in it?"

"One should be good for three hundred thousand, and the other for half that."

"In it yourself?"

"No," curtly.

"I didn't mean no offense," said Bill. "I thought you might be. That sort of work pays better than playing ball, I should think, though in course it ain't quite so safe."

"I am going to stay here for a while."

"In the Castle?"

"Yes."

"Why? In trouble?"

"Yes."

"What kind? Those impudent police been trying to interfere with legitimate business?"

"No. Worse than that."

"Is that so?" asked Bill, drawlingly, as his eyes opened wider than usual. "When did it happen? I see'd you at the ball-ground this afternoon, an' I suppose it must have been since that."

"It was. Soon after the game."

Billy the Buffer gave utterance to a long, though almost inaudible whistle.

"Who was the party? It wasn't that—that young pitcher that some of the boys called Double-Curve Dan, was it?"

"No, curse him!" hissed the other, between his clinched teeth. "I wish it was. I would take my chances willingly if I had laid him out."

Billy Cranch shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose you know what he's done to you, an' I guess he deserves to be laid out if you say so. But, I tell you, he does pitch a strong game."

"Never mind about that. The party I—I—put to sleep was a boy—"

"A boy?"

"Yes. Now don't interrupt me. I was go-

ing to tell you that it was an accident. I wouldn't have hurt him for a thousand dollars. But he got in the way of my knife, and the first thing I knew he was gone."

"You'll have to tell me his name if I am to help you in this thing, according to the rules of the Order," suggested Billy.

"Bob Hetherington, son of Robert Hetherington, Esq., President of the Hetherington Bank of New York," answered Wilfred Noel.

"Bad!" remarked Billy, sententiously.

"Decidedly dangerous!" said the young man.

"Do you think you had better stay here?" asked Mag, joining in the conversation. "The New York police are pretty sharp, and they might come stumbling over Chromo Castle when they get down to a still hunt for you."

"How can I get away, and if I were to go, where should I take myself?" asked Noel, moodily.

"That's so," acquiesced the woman. "I suppose you will have to stay here, and if there are signs that the place will be too hot for you we must get you away by the river. Here, the coffee is ready. Come and get a little lunch and you'll feel better."

She spread a cloth on the table, and soon had a much better meal than would have been expected from a casual glance at the surroundings. There were several kinds of cold meat, canned fish, etc., and a large loaf of new bread. This, with the hot coffee, made a very acceptable repast for a weary, hungry man like Wilfred Noel. As for Bill Cranch, he ate as if he had not tasted food for several days.

The Order of which the pitcher of the New York Club had shown himself to be a member was one of those associations that have been nearly eradicated by the police, but that are in existence here and there, formed by habitual criminals for mutual protection.

As will be easily seen, Wilfred Noel had another business besides that of ball-player. He had been with the New Yorks for only a part of the season, and though his overbearing disposition had caused him to be disliked by his brother players, no one suspected that he was known to a select circle of pals by the title of "Steely Williams," and that he was rapidly acquiring for himself the distinction of being one of the most expert safe-blowers in the East.

Yet, such was the case. So far he had been lucky enough to escape the police. He had been operating for a year, and though he had put through two "bank jobs," the authorities did not as yet suspect that Steely Williams, the bank burglar, and Wilfred Noel, the crack pitcher, were one and the same person.

At least, he hoped they did not, though there was one Albany detective about whom he did not feel so sure as he would have liked.

Noel, or Steely Williams, as we will call him in future, ate and drank mechanically as he tried to think out his circumstances and determine what he was to do. Bad as he was he felt remorse for the death of the lad, Bob, though, even now he told himself that he would not have prevented himself from slaying Dan Manly, if he could have done it. There was evidently a bitter hatred in his heart for the brilliant young pitcher, that went beyond the jealousy engendered by the latter's success in the ball-field.

Billy the Buffer looked stealthily at his silent companion from time to time, but did not venture any remark. The big man stood in considerable awe of the young fellow now that he had discovered he was none other than the famous Steely Williams. He paid the tribute exacted by brains from brute strength everywhere—even among thieves and cut-throats.

Mag Mullins busied herself in supplying the wants of the two men, taking her own meal at intervals as she moved about.

Suddenly the young man stopped eating, and his eyes took on the hunted expression that they showed when he stood on the plank bridge waiting to get in.

He was listening intently.

Bill Cranch's jaw dropped, as he, too, listened.

"What's that?" whispered Steely Williams.

"Did you hear it?"

"Thought I heard something," returned the Buffer, in the same guarded tones, "but it must have been the wind, I guess."

Mag Mullins stepped to the door, placed her ear against it, and held up her finger for strict silence.

Then she darted to the table, blew out the light and softly placed an iron lid on the brasier.

The two men sat still and scarcely breathed.

The next instant there was a loud and peremptory knocking at the door.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE TRAIL.

In one of the finest mansions in that district of fine mansions, Murray Hill, there was mourning as deep as any felt in the most squalid tenement on the east side.

A bed-room, luxuriously furnished, with soft laces and rich hangings to guard the slumberer from every stray breeze or too powerful ray of sunlight.

In the center of the apartment a bedstead of ebony richly carved, with gilding here and there to relieve the dead black of the wood.

The bed was occupied, but the sleeper would no more be disturbed by breeze or sunlight, and the elegance of his surroundings would never give him pleasure again.

The cold, rigid form, that lay so still under the fine white sheet, was that of Bob Hetherington, the pride and hope of the rich man who sat weeping by his side.

A knock at the door, and a servant handed him a card.

"I cannot read it. I do not wish to see anybody!" said Mr. Hetherington testily. "Take it away. No, stay. Let me see who it is."

He aroused himself with an effort and glanced at the card.

"Tell him I will come down at once. Show him into the library. Then come back and stay in the room here until some one else comes in."

While the girl was absent, the father knelt down at the bedside and pressed his lips to the forehead of the dead. What he suffered was known only to himself.

"He is in the library," broke in the girl's voice.

"Very well. I will go down."

He arose from his knees and showed himself to be a tall, well-proportioned man of fifty or thereabouts, with a firm chin and clear-cut nostrils—a man of will, who would pursue what he considered the right course, regardless of obstacles or of public opinion.

"Mr. Hetherington, I think I am on the right track."

The voice was that of Double-Curve Dan. He was the person whose card had been read by the banker, and who had been shown into the library.

"My boy's murderer?"

"Perhaps. I believe that following up the clew I have to the people who robbed your bank on the 30th of May may be the means of my finding this villain Wilfred Noel."

"Well, Dan, I trust to you implicitly."

"You shall never repent that trust, if I can help it," returned the young fellow earnestly.

"You keep the fact that you are in the employ of the Secret Service of New York a strict secret, of course?"

"Most certainly. I have my credentials in an inner pocket of my shirt, in case I should ever be in immediate need of them, and I have my star where I can show it in a second if necessary. See."

He pulled aside some of the blue trimming on his white flannel shirt, and revealed a silver badge star-shaped, on which were engraved the words: "New York Secret Service Special."

"That is well," said the banker. "Now, what have you to tell me?"

"I have received information that has led me to come to you at this time, when nothing but the importance of the knowledge I hold would have induced me to do so."

"Yes, yes, I know. But go on," returned the banker impatiently.

"Will you go out with me to-night?" asked Dan abruptly.

"To-night?"

"Yes."

"No, I cannot do that. I don't care what information you have, or how important it may be, I cannot leave my boy to-night. Besides, my daughter—"

"Tells you to go, father dear," broke in the voice of Ada Hetherington, as she came slowly into the room.

Double-Curve Dan looked at the fair young girl, whose pale face put to shame the pretty white dress that she had worn in the afternoon, and that she had not changed, though two or three red spots on the skirt gave token of her brother's terrible death. He saw that there were traces of tears upon her cheeks, but that she was bravely holding back her grief in the presence of her father.

"Go, father. If Mr. Manly asks you, we may be sure that he has good reason. Remember that we have had proof of his judgment before."

Mr. Hetherington appeared to hesitate for a moment. Then he exclaimed:

"You are right, Ada. Dan, I will go with you."

Double-Curve Dan thanked the girl with a look, and at the same time managed to convey to her that he had already commenced his task of hunting down her brother's slayer.

With a bow to the young detective, Ada left the room to sit by her dead brother's side.

As she slowly ascended the stairs she thought of a certain day in the past spring, when, in Albany, as she was driving in her low pony phaeton, the noise of a fire-engine startled her ponies, and caused them to dash madly away. She was powerless, but a young man leaped into the road, and at the risk of his life stopped the ponies and saved her from an awful fate. She had barely time to thank her preserver and to learn that his name was Daniel Manly, when Wilfred Noel, whom she had met at a reception of the miscellaneous character so common in a State Capital, and who had vigorously pushed the slight acquaintanceship since that time by bowing to her whenever he met her on the street, came boldly forward, and thanking Dan Manly in an off-hand manner on behalf of the lady, had entered the vehicle and driven Ada to her father's temporary home in Albany.

"How brave he was!" thought Ada, as the scene came back to her memory. "How he threw himself right in front of the horses, and then the insolence of that fellow, Noel, to take possession of the carriage! I am afraid that the hatred of that gloomy, mysterious young man for Mr. Manly dated from that day."

She sighed as she thought of the great grief that had now befallen her, and of which she had never dreamed those few short months ago.

It was eleven o'clock when Mr. Hetherington and Double-Curve Dan stepped outside the front door of the former's mansion, and prepared to face the violent summer tempest.

Both were protected by waterproof coats, Mr. Hetherington having lent one to his companion.

"Now, which way are we to go?" asked the banker.

"Down town," answered Dan, briefly, for now that he was in charge of the expedition, he took command, and did not feel bound to explain every detail as he proceeded. It would occupy too much time.

"Lead on!" returned the banker, just as laconically, for he was a sensible man, and recognized at once the relative positions now held by the young detective and himself.

"Oh, by the way! Are you armed?" asked Dan.

"No; I never thought of that. Shall we need weapons, do you think?"

"We may and we may not."

"Which means that I had better be prepared?"

"Decidedly."

Without another word the banker opened the door with a pass-key, and stepped inside, followed by Dan.

"Stay here a moment."

Dan seated himself in a comfortable chair in the hall, while the banker went quietly upstairs. He soon returned, carrying two handsomely-mounted, double-action six-shooters, which he handed to the detective.

"Very good," said Dan. "But I don't think you need them both."

"I brought one for you."

"It is unnecessary."

Dan showed that in an inside pocket of his sack-coat he had a six-shooter, a knife, and a short "billy."

"I never travel on business without my tools. And I am always on duty, day and night," he said.

"I big yer parding, sorr. Wuz ye goin' out to-night?"

The voice was that of a native of the Emerald Isle, and the detective and banker both turned quickly as some one who had come softly along the hall, touched the banker on the arm.

"Hallo, Con! What are you doing in the house?" asked the banker, sternly. "Your place is in the stable."

"Faix, I knows it, sorr, but betune the misfortune that has 'im down on us an' the storm as is playin' the devil wid me constitootin', I made bowld to kim in an' see phat I c'u'd do fer ye, sorr."

"Well, I am going out. You had better go to bed, and not trouble yourself about the storm," was the banker's reply.

Dan Manly, who had been watching the man, whispered something in Mr. Hetherington's ear.

"Oh, yes, faithful as the sun," said the latter, aloud.

"Then let him go with us. We may have to deal with desperate men."

"Very well. Con, button up your coat and come with us. Here, take this," handing him the revolver that Dan had declined.

"Och! Be jabbers! We are goin' to have some divarshun, eh? If I meet any spalpeen wid too much talk, why, the saints rest his soul, for I'll spill him all over the land, so I will."

Con waved the revolver, and was evidently about to emit an Irish war-cry of the good old kind, when Mr. Hetherington seized him by the shoulder, and sternly whispered:

"Do you remember where you are, and what has happened to-day?"

Con subsided instantly, as he replied penitently:

"Indade an' I do, peace be wid him. Ah! he wuz such a purty b'ye, an' he handled horses as well as I c'u'd meself, so he c'u'd."

Con Joyce was a little fellow, who had but lately come from the "ould country," but who already took a warm interest in American politics, and was a "Dimocrat to the backbone."

He was a merry-faced, warm-hearted, brave fellow, and he thought Mr. Hetherington and his people the finest he had ever seen.

There was nothing remarkable in his personal appearance save his "Galway sluggers" of bright red that he still persisted in wearing, and a pair of blue eyes that were always dancing in fun or mischief.

The three did not waste any more time.

They walked out into the pouring rain, and with heads bowed as the blinding lightning flashed continuously across the sky, made their way down Broadway.

They did not talk much, nothing being said but an occasional word from Dan as to the direction to be pursued, as he turned off here and there, and led his companions through a maze of tenement-house streets that are a distinguishing feature of the east side of New York.

Soon the smell of the never-too-sweet East River assailed their nostrils.

"Much further, Dan?" asked the banker.

"No," was Dan's short reply.

The detective paused at the corner of a street under the flickering light of a gas-lamp.

A police officer in uniform stepped out of a dark doorway and came forward. He stood with his back partly toward Dan Manly, and said:

"Do you want me to-night? Captain Martin told me to stay here and report to you when you came along."

"Go back to the station and take off your uniform. Then come back and wait again. I may need you."

"All right, sir."

The policeman moved carelessly away into his doorway, and the others passed on.

On the other side of the dark street, skulking along in the shadow of the tall houses was a wet, wretched figure, with a keen dirk-knife up his sleeve.

He saw the conference, though he could not hear what was said.

He shook his fist in the direction of the three men as they went around the corner, and muttered:

"Sol! You are following me up pretty closely, are you? Well, I'll fool you yet, as sure as my name is Steely Williams—or Wilfred Noel, whichever you like."

CHAPTER VI.

A NARROW ESCAPE FOR BILLY THE BUFFER.

DAN MANLY led his two companions on by tortuous ways for another five minutes. Then he stopped before a large gateway that led directly to a wharf.

The gates, old and worm-eaten, were wide open, and as the lightning occasionally illuminated the scene, it showed that heaps of old iron were the principal contents of the wharf.

Broken car-wheels, old rails, sections of ornamental fences, pots and kettles, everything that comes under the designation of scrap iron, was to be seen there by the ton, many times multiplied.

Double-Curve Dan walked forward as if acquainted with the place, his companions following him closely.

"Seven, eight, nine!"

He was counting his steps.

"Seventeen steps and a half straight toward the river from the left gate-post. This must be the spot."

Dan shuffled his feet in the mud at the place he had reached, and gave utterance to a smothered exclamation of satisfaction.

He stooped down and pulled an iron ring from the mud and water. It was securely fastened to something.

"Have your weapons handy and follow me quickly," he said, briefly, without looking around.

He tugged at the iron ring, but it would not move. It was as firm as if riveted to a rock.

"Con, take hold and help," commanded the banker.

"Be jabbers, I'll do anything for a change. Me heart is bruk, so it is, wid the wettin' I'm gettin'," answered the little Irishman, lugubriously.

He knelt down in a puddle of dirty water, with a comical expression of resignation on his face, and pulled, with Dan, at the iron ring.

A tug together, and then something suddenly gave way, causing Con Joyce to sit down with a splash in the pool of water.

"Ow! o-w! Be St. Peter, but it's wet I am. Ow! murtherin' houn's, why did I iver kim to the country onyhaw?"

"Silence!" whispered Dan, fiercely. "Help me with this."

The rain had stopped, though the lightning and thunder continued. It was just about the time that Wilfred Noel—or Steely Williams—gained admission to Chromo Castle.

The banker now saw that the iron ring was attached to a round, flat, iron plate, like the cover of a coal cellar, revealing a dark hole in the ground, into which the water from the puddle referred to above was pouring.

"Mr. Hetherington, follow me. Come, Con."

As he spoke, Double-Curve Dan squeezed himself through the hole and disappeared.

The banker, without hesitation, went down after him, closely followed by Con Joyce.

The three men found themselves in pitch darkness, standing on a sticky, clayey floor. There was plenty of room when once through the hole, though it had been a tight squeeze to effect an entrance.

Dan reached up through the hole and pulled the iron plate into position.

"The rain and mud will soon gather on it again," he observed, as he felt in an inner pocket for some matches, which he always carried in a silver water-tight box.

He struck a wax match, and by its light looked around him.

The room in which the three men stood was about six feet square, and was nothing more than a hole dug in the ground, with boards braced around the sides to prevent the earth falling in. It had evidently, in years past, been a smugglers' retreat, and doubtless had contained millions of dollars' worth of treasure at different times in its existence.

On one side there was a low doorway, not more than four feet in height. It was closed by a stout wooden door, securely bolted. As the bolt was on the side occupied by Dan and his companions, it did not take him long to shoot it back and open the door.

"You seem to know this place well, Dan. I suppose you have been here before in your hunts for criminals?"

"No. This is my first visit. I learned of it only about two hours ago."

"Who told you?"

The young detective smiled.

"That, Mr. Hetherington, I cannot tell you. The secret police would not long be secret if they were not careful to keep their sources of information to themselves. I am sworn not to say anything about the inner workings of the service."

"I beg your pardon."

Mr. Hetherington was a man of the world, and he recognized the justice of Dan Manly's words.

"Be jabbers! this is inner workin's, sure, down here ondergroun'. Faix, me own mother wouldn't know the face av me if she wuz here, be the token that it's too dark to see anything," put in Con.

"You think those papers stolen from the bank two weeks ago are down here somewhere, I suppose?" asked the banker, as Dan lighted another match.

"I do; and I believe we shall recover a great deal of the money, too. I have very reliable information."

"I don't care so much about the money if I can only get those title-deeds. They represent a large part of my daughter's separate fortune, and I do not want to risk it in any way. You know she is the defendant in a suit brought by a powerful corporation, to claim a whole block in New York City which was left to her by her mother's uncle. If the deeds are lost, it will give the corporation an advantage that we can ill afford. Nothing but these peculiarly important circumstances would have induced me to

come on this expedition to-night, with my poor boy lying at home."

Tears choked his voice, and Dan Manly, in the hope of diverting his thoughts from his grief, said:

"Stoop down and go through the doorway, Mr. Hetherington. Our way lies ahead."

This was the last door they encountered—for a time, at least. Dan pushed it back into its place, but of course could not fasten it, the bolt being on the other side. It shut with an ordinary latch, however, and the bolt could have been shot, too, if he had known that a little arrangement of wire for that purpose hung in a corner behind the door. He did not know it, and hence the door remained unbolted.

Dan walked along the passage in which they found themselves, and which varied in height, sometimes being so low that they had to go almost on their hands and knees, and at other places being so high that they could not reach the top.

At intervals they came to where the passage branched off, leaving two or three paths from which to choose. The young detective never hesitated at any of these junctions, but kept straight on as confidently as if he had lived in these underground regions all his life.

It was very dark, for Dan had not lighted any more matches after the second had burned out, but they had no difficulty in pursuing their journey. The detective knew the way, and his two companions had nothing to do but to follow him.

Suddenly Dan placed his hands on the banker and Con and drew them against the wall.

They had just reached a place where two other places joined that along which they were walking.

"Hist!" whispered Dan. "Not a sound. Don't even breathe for a minute."

Footsteps were approaching along one of the other passages. They might be those of an enemy; they could not be those of a friend.

The three men remained quite still as the stranger, whoever he was, came rapidly toward them. He was evidently not afraid of attracting attention, taking it for granted that any one in that secret locality must belong to the fraternity, in whose possession it had been for forty years at least.

He walked with a heavy tread, and whistled softly to himself.

A stream of light shot along the passage, avoiding the three men standing against the wall by not more than three feet.

It was unnecessary for Dan to warn the banker or Con to get their weapons ready. They each had their pistols in hand at the first sound of the stranger's footsteps.

The light dodged and danced about, but never happened to strike the place where stood three desperate men, to whom discovery meant a deadly struggle.

"A bull's-eye lantern," muttered Dan.

The stranger came right toward them and passed—passed so closely that he almost brushed against the muzzle of the revolver that Con Joyce held pointed outward ready to shoot anything that might come along, from a Bowery tough to a stray mastodon.

If the man who carried the bull's-eye lantern had happened to turn it toward the left as he passed, thus revealing the three men against the wall, he would have been shot as certainly as that Con Joyce's finger was on the trigger of his self-cocking revolver.

Had this taken place we might have had a different tale to tell.

But he did not turn. He walked straight ahead, and as his flashing lantern at last disappeared, Dan and his companions followed in the same direction.

The stranger was none other than Billy the Buffer, on his way to Chromo Castle, to which place, as the reader has doubtless surmised, Double-Curve Dan was taking Mr. Hetherington and the little Irishman.

"Now, careful!" warned Dan, as at length he approached the end of the passage, where he could hear the lapping of the river and feel the cool breeze blowing in his face.

He stopped a minute to reconnoiter, and then, satisfied that all was safe, led the way to the plank bridge so often mentioned in these pages.

"Now, Mr. Hetherington, I have reason to believe that those papers and most of the money stolen from the Hetherington Bank of New York are in this shanty."

"Well?"

"We must obtain entrance by strategy, if possible. Failing that, by force."

"You can depend upon my doing my best."

The scoundrels!" replied the banker, grinding his teeth.

"An' I'll kill every one of the murtherin' spalpeens if I ever git me goon p'inted at 'em," added Con.

They walked across the bridge and Dan knocked at the door. This was the knocking that so disturbed the occupants of the castle, especially Steely Williams.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHOWER OF FIRE.

THE three persons in the shanty scarcely breathed as the knocking at the door was repeated again and again.

"Let us in or we will make it the worse for you," cried a voice that caused Steely Williams to clench his fist.

It was the voice of Double-Curve Dan.

Then all was silent.

The knocking ceased and no one spoke outside.

"What does that mean?" whispered Billy the Buffer, hoarsely in the old woman's ear.

Her only reply was to clutch his arm in token of silence.

"Trapped, like rats!" hissed Steely Williams, as he drew his dirk-knife and held it ready for action.

"Yes, they mean mischief," said Mag in the same guarded tones. "They are not quiet for nothing."

"Better go up and look out, Mag," grunted Bill.

Without another word the hag climbed to her post of observation in the cupboard and took an observation of the bridge.

It was empty!

She looked for an instant down at the water, glimmering in the reflected light of the moon which had now taken the place of the lightning, for the storm had died completely away and left a most beautiful night behind it.

"Well?" growled the Buffer, impatiently.

"Shut up!" commanded the woman, looking inside for a minute to say the two words, and immediately resuming her position at the window.

Then she came in, closed the trap and hustled down the ladder.

"Git!" she whispered.

Billy the Buffer emitted a long whistle.

"Do you mean that the crib is given away?"

"That's what!"

"Where are they?"

Mag pointed significantly downward.

"Somebody has put 'em on, sure," growled Billy, as he lighted a match and applied it to the lamp. It is no use our hiding ourselves in the dark any longer. It is a clear case of fight now."

"All the better!" muttered Steely Williams, as his heavy brows seemed to meet over his deep-set black eyes.

"There are three of them," observed Mag Mullins, sententiously.

"Who are they?"

"I don't know. There is a young duck, not very big, who gets around pretty lively—"

"Dan Manly," put in Steely.

"An' an old fellow, with gray whiskers, who looks too well-fed and stiff in the neck to be a poor man. I heard the young fellow call him Mr. Heth—Heth—Hetherbum, or something—"

"Heavens! it must be Hetherington!" said Steely Williams, in a trembling voice. "He is the last man I want to see now."

"I don't want to see none of 'em for my part. It's too durned near home. If I wanted to make their acquaintance I'd rather meet 'em on Broadway at a fashionable hour in the afternoon. That's my style," volunteered Billy the Buffer, with a grin.

"Who's the third?" asked Steely Williams, eagerly.

"Couldn't see, exactly. He has whiskers all around his face, and I heard him say something about 'Be jabbers.'"

"I don't know who he can be. Probably some one to help the other two. But what's the next thing to be done?"

"To get away by boat, I guess," replied Billy.

"How shall we get to it? Where is the boat?"

"It's hanging close up under the floor," answered Mag. "Come here."

"Why can't we go across the bridge and get out by the passage?" asked Bill Cranch.

"And be shot from below as soon as we got the door open," sneered the woman. "Don't you know that those people are here for Steely Williams, and that they know every secret about Chromo Castle?"

"How did they find it out?" asked Bill, with a suspicious glance at Mag.

The woman picked up the iron bar that she had taken in her hand when Steely Williams first knocked at the door, ere she retorted:

"Perhaps you know how they found out, Bill Cranch, and perhaps they don't. But don't you dare to look at me when you ask such a question, or I'll crack your thick skull with this poker. Now, you just mind me, will you?"

Mrs. Mullins's temper was not particularly sweet, as we have seen before. Billy the Buffer knew it, and he did not press his insinuation further.

She did not condescend to talk any longer with Mr. Cranch, but putting one end of the bar, which was bent and sharpened at the extremity, and was in fact nothing less than a gigantic "jimmy," into a small iron slot in the floor opposite the door, pressed upon it with all her strength.

The immense leverage she thus obtained released a portion of the flooring and exposed a hole some four feet square.

Below flowed the river.

She knelt on the floor, and reaching underneath felt about as if searching for something. Then she withdrew her hand and looked up in the face of Billy the Buffer.

"All right?" he asked.

"All right," was her brief reply.

"She was just feeling to make sure that our safe hasn't been disturbed. There's some things in it as belongs to you, Steely."

"Indeed?" said Steely Williams, indifferently. "I didn't know exactly where the Society had put them, but I supposed they were secure, wherever they were."

"You bet! No one has ever got the better of the Order yet, and Chromo Castle has never had any strange visitors until to-day, either," growled Billy.

"Ha! What's that? By the powers, they have found the west door."

Mag Mullins stood up as she spoke and pointed to a spot in the floor several feet away where a faint scraping could be heard.

"Well, hurry, then. We can't afford to lose any time," declared Bill Cranch, as he hastily let himself down the hole.

He did not drop into the water, as would have seemed his intention. Instead he supported himself on his elbows and stretched first one foot, and then the other under the floor.

He had evidently found some support for his feet, for he slid right out of sight in a horizontal position, and declared in a muffled voice, from his invisible resting-place, that he was "all right."

The scraping at the other part of the floor was growing louder every instant.

"Shall I go under, Mag?" asked Steely Williams. "They will be through directly."

"They will," agreed Mag.

"Then there will be another mur—"

Steely stopped. He could not finish the ugly word.

The woman laughed mockingly. She was utterly without pity for this young man who had confessedly betrayed friends and killed an innocent boy. But she was bound by the oath of the Order to which both belonged to assist him to the full extent of her power, and she would do it till the death.

"You mean murder, eh? Shouldn't call it that when it only affects police an' sich," she said.

More scrapping and they saw that the floor was shaking in that spot.

"Keep them down till I get out of sight can't you?" implored Steely.

"I'll try."

She saw a way to keep the enemy back for a time, at least. They were coming through the floor by way of what she had called the "West Door," which was a four-foot trap similar to that by which Billy the Buffer had disappeared.

Chromo Castle was arranged for the easy escape of its occupants in case of alarm, and the floors and walls were full of secret doors.

Mag ran across the room and seized the brasier in which the coke fire was still brightly burning, and which was furnished with iron handles that enabled it to be easily moved. She carried it to the spot where the scraping was still to be heard and and put it down on the section of the flooring which she had designated the "West Door."

"Now, hump yourself," was her admonition to Steely Williams, who was just drawing himself out of sight after Bill Cranch.

She looked around, and letting herself through the hole after him with much more ease than had characterized his movements, in spite of her being a woman, she allowed her

head to show above the floor as she pulled the trap-door down and held it ready to close at a second's notice.

"The West Door drops instead of pushing up," she muttered. "I wonder whether they know that."

More scraping, and then—a crash, as the West Door fell in and a shower of fiery coals fell on the heads of Double-Curve Dan and his two companions.

Mag Mullins laughed fiendishly as she saw it, and with a yell of defiance, closed the door over her own head.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOUBLE-CURVE DAN IN A DEATH CLUTCH.

WHEN Mag disappeared and shut the trap after her she gave herself a push by means of the heavy rafters that supported the floor.

Now the secret of the boat was explained. It was hung by means of block and tackle immediately under the floor, but not underneath the hole by which access was gained to it. That would have taken away the secret character of this means of escape, which was the most important part of it.

Billy the Buffer was seated in the center of the boat, and already had the tackle in his hand preparatory to dropping the boat into the water, the ropes and blocks were constantly examined, and were always in as good running order as the machinery of a fire-engine.

Steely Williams sat in the stern, with the rudder lines in his grasp.

Both were bent forward, for the boat was too near the floor to permit of their sitting upright.

As the crash met their ears both involuntarily felt for their weapons.

They were separated from their pursuers by a double thickness of stout oaken boards that extended almost down to the water. The designers of Chromo Castle had foreseen as possible just such a contingency as the present, when it would be desirable for the regular occupants of the shanty to depart without being seen by visitors seeking admission by another entrance from below.

"You needn't stir, gentlemen," observed Mag Mullins airily. "They have enough on their hands—I mean heads—to occupy them for a few minutes without troubling you."

"Mag, you are a pretty smart woman, durn my boots, ef you ain't!" growled Bill Cranch, admiringly. "If I wasn't engaged to a young lady as was the belle of Long Branch last season, I'd offer you my heart, hand and fortune, sure as you're born."

"Don't be a fool, Bill," was the ungracious response to this flattering declaration. "We shall have work to do before we get out of this, or I don't know nothing."

"All right, my girl. Lower away!"

As he spoke he loosened the tackle, and with a plunge the boat struck the river.

It was the work of an instant to disengage the tackle from the boat, and the iron hooks and ropes flew back to their places among the rafters automatically.

Bill Cranch put out the oars that lay in the boat ready for use, and with a dexterous pull turned the head of the craft toward the open river.

"Easy, Steely! Keep her head on for the current. It flows pretty swift down this shore at this time in the morning."

Steely Williams did not reply, but he obeyed Bill Cranch's directions in silence.

The boat was a good-sized skiff, sitting easily and solidly in the water but having a sharp bow and a good run that enabled more speed to be made than the boat would seem capable of at first sight.

Bill pulled hard at the oars, but the boat did not make very much headway.

"What in thunderation is the matter with her? She hasn't caught in nothing, has she?" exclaimed Bill.

Mag leaned over the gunwale and felt around it with her hands.

"No, she seems to be all clear."

"Well, durn my skin, if this ain't funny!" he grumbled. "I'm pullin' the life out of myself."

He gave another vicious pull at the oars.

The boat slowly backed, going dead against the efforts of the oarsman.

"Look out, Bill! What are you doing with the boat?" whispered Mag.

"Smash my collar-bone if I know," gasped Bill, as he made another mighty attempt to propel the boat from the shanty.

Another tug and still the boat went doggedly back to the spot from which it had started.

It reached the thick oaken wall, and then slowly but irresistibly swung around to the other side of it.

"Stop it! Stop it!" almost screamed Mag. "I can't stop it, you durned fool," spluttered Bill Cranch.

Steely Williams did not speak but he got that deadly dirk-knife into his hand, and made up his mind that he would put his rival out of the way, and remove a dangerous enemy at one stroke if he got a chance.

He knew that Dan Manly was on the other side of that wall, and he was no longer anxious to avoid him. The murderous instinct was strong within him.

Not a sound had come from the pursuing party after the brasier of fire had fallen upon them through the West Door.

"Wonder whether they were all burned to death and didn't have time to holler?" muttered Mag.

The boat swung around the wall, and at the same instant a lithe, active form bounded into the boat, while a pair of hands clutched Steely Williams's throat.

"Now, Wilfred Noel, I guess it is my turn," said Dan Manly's voice, as he bore the other back against the stern.

"Ow! Be the powers! Here's a picnic on the wather. Och! Wurra! Wurra! Phuy did I iver kim. Begorra, all the curls are singed off the head uv me be the foire, bad 'cess to the ould woman that put it there, an' now to be drown-ed in the river. Git out, ye dhirty spalpeen."

The voice was that of Con Joyce, and was accompanied by a desperate attack on Bill Cranch.

The little Irishman had his self-cocking revolver in his hand, but forgot all about pulling the trigger. He preferred to use it as a club and had given Billy the Buffer a hearty thump on the shoulder with the butt-end of his weapon before that muscular gentlemen knew what was coming.

"Git off me, you monkey, or I'll break you in two," growled Cranch, as he dodged just in time to avoid another blow that would have fractured his skull if it had reached its mark.

In the mean time Double-Curve Dan was struggling desperately with Steely Williams.

The detective had been so indignant, and was so eager to secure the wretch who had taken the life of Ada Hetherington's brother that he had forgotten his usual caution, and attacked his foe without getting a weapon in his hand first.

"Surrender, Wilfred Noel, or I'll kill you right here," said Dan.

"Who are you? What right have you to be hunting me down, anyhow? What should I surrender for?"

"What are you doing in a place like this at two o'clock in the morning?"

"What are you doing here yourself? I believe you are a crook, or you wouldn't be here," hissed Steely.

The cool insolence of the fellow was almost too much for Dan Manly's patience. He tightened his hold on the other's throat.

"By heavens, I will kill you!" he said, sternly.

With a sudden wrench Steely released himself from his assailant's grasp, and threw the latter on his back in the boat just as Bill Cranch had gained the mastery over Con Joyce.

It was a desperate moment.

Mag Mullins took no part in the battle, but sat at one end of the boat, holding to the side with both hands to save herself from being thrown overboard by the violent rocking but otherwise not seeming to care which way things went.

Mr. Hetherington was nowhere to be seen.

"Now I want to tell you something before I put you where you will never be able to say anything in this world again," hissed Steely Williams, as he glared down into the face of Double-Curve Dan. The moon was at the full, and gave plenty of light for the young pitcher to note the fierce expression of his adversary's dark eyes.

"Say what you have to say," returned Dan, returning the other's gaze unflinchingly.

"I will. You have come between me in a way that I do not allow from any one."

A smile curved the young pitcher's lip.

"It is a habit I have," he said, contemptuously.

"There is a young lady to whom you have presumed to lift your eyes. That presumption on your part has caused the death of her brother—"

"You villain!"

"And has ruined my chances with her forever. But that is not all. You have interfered with my business in several ways. When I re-

fused to pitch for the club it was because it suited my purpose."

"Doubtless," observed Dan.

"Yes, and then you had to come in, with your ridiculous curves and do your best to make me look small. That was enough to make me determine to shut you off. For I am a man that kills."

"You have shown that, you cur!" gasped Dan, as the other tightened his grip on his throat.

"Yes, but that is not all. You are hunting for the man that did the job at Hetherington's bank. Aha! You are surprised that I know! But it is my business to keep posted on such things. Well, I am the man that blew open that safe two weeks ago, and I have the money and papers from it put safely away. The people in the ball club call me Wilfred Noel, but I am known to my private friends as Steely Williams."

"You?" said Dan in utter astonishment.

"Yes, I. And now, curse you! that I have told you my secret, you can take it with you to the other world!"

Steely Williams strengthened his clutch on Dan's throat with his left hand, and raised his dirk with his right.

Before the blow could descend, there was a violent agitation of the boat, and the next instant Steely Williams and Double-Curve Dan were in the dark, muddy water, sinking—sinking, the former still clinging to the detective's throat with the determination of a most desperate hate.

CHAPTER IX.

ON BOARD THE SCHOONER DE RUYTER.

WE must go back to the afternoon when Double-Curve Dan so hastily left Lionel Lacey and Dick Worth to follow Ada Hetherington out of the Polo Ground.

The two young men watched the new pitcher until he disappeared through the gateway, having no idea of the tragic scene that was enacted just outside.

"What do you think of him, Lionel?" asked Dick Worth.

"Think of him! Why, that curve of his is something wonderful!" was the enthusiastic reply. "He can't be hit at all, I believe, as long as he has a fair show."

"So I think. You and he make the strongest battery we have had for several seasons."

"I suppose you will sign him?"

"If I can get him, yes. Though I don't know how Noel would take it."

"What does it matter how Noel would take it?" exclaimed Lacey indignantly. "I don't see why the club keeps such a fellow, anyhow."

"You can't see everything you know, Lionel," said the captain quietly.

"No, of course not. The fellow may have some virtues that are not apparent on the surface. Well, let's go to the hotel and take a stroll."

"I'm with you."

The two young men went to the dressing-room and soon changed their ball uniforms for the ordinary dress of civilized life. Then they went out on the street by a private doorway, without hearing anything of the quarrel between the two pitchers that had ended so terribly.

They walked down Broadway and stepped into the Hoffman House, where the ball game was the general topic of conversation, and where there was plenty of praise for the new pitcher and condemnation for the man who had so shamefully treated his own club by refusing to play, and then trying to spoil the game afterward.

It was late in the evening when Dick proposed that they should go aboard the schooner of a Dutch friend of his, who had that day arrived in the East River after a leisurely voyage from Holland, and enjoy a real Dutch supper in the captain's little cabin.

"I should like it very much," said Lionel.

"Come along, then."

Dick Worth knew his way about every part of New York, and soon they were standing on a wharf arranging with the owner of a skiff to put them aboard the short, squat craft, with the Dutch and American flags both flying from their peaks, which Worth pointed out as the De Ruyter, Mynheer Johann Van der Straten, master.

"She looks as if she was built more for safety than for speed, eh, Dick?" remarked Lionel, as their skiff ran under her bows.

"Yes, Van der Straten does not believe in hurrying. He just likes to sail before the wind easi-

ly and comfortably, and I believe he would rather strike a calm than a gale at any time. Not that he is not a good sailor and a brave man, but he does not believe in wearing himself out."

"De Ruyter, ahoy!" sung out Lionel, in obedience to Worth's request that he would hail the vessel.

"Vell, vat's der drubble?"

A round face, surmounted by a queer little cap, with a tassel hanging over the left side, looked over the stern and surveyed the boat and its occupants.

"How are you, Van der Straten?" shouted Dick Worth, in response.

"Ach! Dot vas you, eh, Deeck? Vell, coom oop, und take a shmoke."

Having uttered these words, the owner of the round face walked coolly away and went down into his little cabin, leaving his visitors to get aboard by themselves, if they cared to.

"The same old Johann," laughed Worth. "Never catch him exciting himself. But he is a splendid fellow at heart, all the same."

The two young men climbed the ladder that hung over the side, and walked along the well-scoured deck to the little hatchway, with its narrow stairs that led to the captain's cabin.

"Seet down," was the welcome accorded by mynheer as the two young men stumbled down the stairs and shot head-first into a bunk on the opposite side of the little cabin.

"Thanks!" said Dick.

He and Lionel laughingly extricated themselves from the bunk and took seats on a locker, Mynheer Van der Straten smoking composedly at a short clay pipe the while, quite undisturbed by the acrobatic performances of his visitors.

"Well, Johann, so you've got back to New York again, eh?" said Dick.

"Yaw!"

"Good voyage?"

"Yaw."

"What did you bring with you?"

"Schnapps."

"That all?"

"Cheese."

"Tobacco?"

Mynheer nodded and leaning forward, puffed a cloud of tobacco smoke into Dick's face.

"Ob, yes, I see. It is good tobacco. Is that the kind you have brought with you?"

"Yaw."

Mynheer seemed to be tired after his brilliant conversational efforts, for he sat back in his big chair, which was screwed to the floor, and smoked for at least five minutes in silence, with his eyes shut.

Worth was used to the peculiarities of his Dutch friend, and waited patiently for his reverie to come to a conclusion.

Lionel Lacey was too much amused to say anything. It was his first introduction to a Simon-pure Amsterdam Dutchman, and he enjoyed the experience amazingly.

All at once the skipper woke up, and rising slowly from his seat, rolled across the cabin to a certain little locker in the corner. From it he took two long clay pipes, an earthen jar of tobacco and a queer-shaped, basket-covered stone jug.

Deliberately he broke several inches off each pipe, filled them with tobacco, which he pressed somewhat tightly into the bowls with a very fat thumb and presented one to each of the young men.

They took them involuntarily, and at a sign from the host, put them in their mouths.

He gravely lighted a match, and held the flame to each of the pipes in turn, so that the visitors were compelled to smoke.

To Dick Worth this was pleasant enough, but poor Lacey was not used to smoking and he had misgivings that the Dutchman's strong tobacco would be the death of him before he could get out of the stuffy little cabin.

Worth saw his friend's discomfort so he told the skipper that he had promised Lionel a real Dutch supper on board the De Ruyter.

"Yaw! Dot vas right."

"I knew that it was safe to promise it without asking your sanction," added Dick.

"Yaw. Lisa!"

This last word, uttered in tones such as he would have used in ordering his crew to "furl foretopsails" brought into the cabin a young girl that Lionel thought was the daintiest creature he had ever beheld. She was about eighteen years of age, and in her pretty face there was still enough resemblance to the skipper to verify his words when he said:

"Mine daughter, Lisa."

The young men both bowed respectfully, and were favored with a roguish smile in return.

"Lisa, give us some supper."

"Yes, father."

Lisa had been educated in New York academy, as the young men afterward learned, and bore no trace of a Dutch accent on her tongue.

Dutch cheese, raw ham, hard boiled eggs and raw onions were the viands spread before them, to which all did justice, especially the host, whose consumption of the raw onions was something alarming.

Lisa stayed in the cabin and dutifully looked after her father's wants. The young men helped themselves, thus allowing the girl to give mynheer her undivided attention.

The meal finished, mynheer immediately resumed his pipe, as if he regretted the time lost from it in eating, and Dick Worth followed his example. Lionel Lacey was only too glad not to be obliged to smoke and allowed his pipe to remain on the locker by his side where he had put it after taking a few whiffs before supper.

"Well, mynheer, suppose we go on deck and have our smoke," suggested Dick when Lisa had cleared the table and disappeared through the narrow slip of a door opposite the stairs by which she had entered.

"Yaw!" acquiesced the skipper.

The wind was getting fresh as the three reached the deck. The river was dark, and the lights on the New York side gleamed fitfully as the wind caught them, or, when they were in houses, as the people passed to and fro in the rooms.

"Going to be an ugly night, I'm afraid, captain," ventured Worth.

"Yaw."

Mynheer Van der Straten was not in the least disturbed. He was anchored and moored in a safe spot, and it mattered nothing to him if the whole firmament were split wide open as long as his schooner, De Ruyter, was not set adrift.

He walked up and down the deck with the rolling gait peculiar to him, and silently pointed to different parts of his vessel that he thought deserved the admiration of his visitors. If the worthy skipper had any pride, it was in his ship and his daughter Lisa.

There was no one else on deck, save the two men on watch. All the crew were of the same nationality as their commander.

One of them stood in the bow, looking contemplatively over the side into the water. It is not likely that he could see anything, but his gaze was as intent as if he had been fishing for pearls.

As the three walked along the deck to the other end of the vessel, Mynheer Van der Straten stopped suddenly and administered a hearty kick to something that looked in the gloom like a coil of rope.

The "coil of rope" stood up, and showed itself to be the other sailor on watch, who had cast himself down for a short nap.

Neither he nor the skipper spoke one word. The sailor commenced to march up and down, rubbing himself where the square toe of Johann Van der Straten's boot had struck him, while the latter passed on, smoking as unconcerned as ever.

The performance struck Lionel Lacey as being so comical that he burst into a fit of laughter, of which, however, mynheer took not the least notice. What he had done was a common occurrence on board his ship, where he maintained discipline by prompt physical punishment of any neglect of duty.

The wind had rapidly increased while the three had been on deck, and now the thunderstorm burst upon them in all its violence.

"Better be getting ashore, I guess, mynheer," said Dick Worth.

"Nein. Sleep here."

Mynheer Van der Straten laid his fat hand on the young man's shoulder and pointed to the deck, as an intimation that they could be well provided with bunks below.

"We have to play again to-morrow, Lionel, but I guess we can sleep on board the schooner just as well as, and perhaps better than, in a hotel bedroom. Let us stay."

"Certainly," agreed Lacey, heartily, for he liked novelty of any kind, and he had never slept on a Dutch trading-vessel before.

"Wet!" grunted mynheer, as the rain came down in sheets and the thunder and lightning hurtled through the rigging.

Dick Worth and Lionel Lacey had already reached the gangway and were descending the stairs to the cabin when Van der Straten, who, sailor-like had been taking a last look around before following them, shaded his eyes, as he looked steadfastly at a certain wharf, between the rows of shipping, and remarked, positively, but almost unconcernedly:

"Dere is dirty work over dere. River thieves. Vere is mein rubber coat?"

"Thieves?" cried Worth, eagerly.

"Yaw." Then with a shout: "All hands lower away der yawl! I goes to take a hand in der foon."

CHAPTER X.

STEELY WILLIAMS MAKES A POINT IN THE GAME.

WHEN Double-Curve Dan found himself in the river, with the angry waters surging in his ears, and with Wilfred Noel's (Steely Williams's) fingers still clutching his throat he realized that he was in the tightest fix of his life.

His assailant did not seem to care what became of himself as long as he got the better of Dan, and if he could swim (and Dan knew enough of Steely Williams by reputation to be aware that he was as much at home in the water as on shore,) he did not make any attempt to exercise his ability in that direction.

Dan Manly, however, had no wish to die in such a way, and though his hands were employed in keeping the knife away and in defending himself from Steely Williams, his feet were free enough to use them as paddles.

He had to sustain both himself and his foe, and it was therefore nearly half a minute before they arose to the surface.

"Och! You murtherin villain! Let go of me!" were the first words that struck their ears as their heads arose from the water.

A small platform, immediately under the "West Door," afforded a resting-place for Mag Mullins and Billy the Buffer. Both were soaked with water.

The explanation of their condition was apparent at a glance. The skiff floated bottom upward.

Everybody in it had been thrown into the river with Dan Manly and Steely Williams.

The woman and Bill had managed to scramble out on the platform.

But where was Con Joyce?"

Surely that wretched object that Bill Cranch was holding with its head just out of water could not be the lively little Irishman?

"Let go uv me, ye shpalpeen. Ye are dragging the hair out uv me head, so you be."

It was Con, and very indignant he was as the big desperado held him by the hair at the edge of the platform. Yet if Cranch had obeyed him and released his hold it might have gone hard with Con.

Bill gave a tug at Con's head and landed him, wet and flopping, like a gigantic gamy fish, on the platform.

"Now lie there, or I'll crack your neck," growled Cranch, as he gave Con an admonitory kick.

Con felt in his pocket to see if his revolver was safe, and remembered that he had had it in his hand when he went overboard.

"If I had only fired it off just once I'd not have cared a cent, so I wouldn't," he muttered.

Bill Cranch's attention was now taken up with the struggle with Dan Manly and Steely Williams. The former had seized an oar, and his adversary had released his hold on Manly's throat to grasp the overturned boat.

Both were afraid to move. Steely had thrown his knife-hand around Dan's neck, but, thus situated, could not strike, more especially as Dan had a tight grip on his wrist.

"Surrender, Steely Williams, or it will be the worse for you," said Dan. "I'm not alone. I have men close at hand who will arrest you, even if I am not able to do it."

"Let them arrest me. I don't care. This is not a case of officer and prisoner only with you and me. I have a personal grudge against you, and Steely Williams lets nothing stand in the way of his revenge."

"It will mean the hangman's rope for you in any case."

Steely did not answer. Securing a firmer hold on the boat with his left hand, he threw his legs around the body of Dan Manly under water with the skill of a professional wrestler, and threw his adversary backward by main strength, so that his head went under water.

Dan's hands waved wildly above the surface in his efforts to get his mouth out of the water.

Bill Cranch and Mag Mullins were watching the struggle breathlessly.

The brasier that had been overturned by the woman when the "West Door" was pushed open from below, lay on the platform. The hot coals lay by its side in a heap on the wet platform, and gave enough light to reveal the forms of Steely and the detective, as they tossed to and fro in the water, even if the rays of moon-

light had not penetrated into the shadows, and made everything stand forth distinctly.

With a mighty effort Dan got his head out long enough to shout "Con!"

"Sure an' I'm right—"

"Here!" he was about to add, when Bill Cranch, with an oath, hit the little Irishman in the mouth, and commanded him to be silent.

Again Steely Williams, who seemed to have superhuman strength now, though he had been so weak and faint when he knocked for admittance at Chromo Castle a short time ago, managed to face Dan under water.

"Now, I have you!" he muttered, as he got his right arm free.

Once, twice! he struck at the young pitcher's breast through the water with that wicked knife. Then gathering himself together, he thrust his foot violently in the face of the wounded Dan.

He saw that the body sunk out of sight, and waiting for a minute, found that it did not come up.

"So much for the fellow that tries to play it on Steely Williams," he muttered, as he pulled himself out of the water and onto the platform.

"You've fixed that rooster, sure, Steely, but I am afraid it will mean more trouble for us. Durned if Chromo Castle ain't getting pretty hot for the residence of law-abiding citizens," said Bill Cranch, grimly.

"You talk like a fool! Why isn't Chromo Castle as safe as any other place now that I've put that fellow out of the way?" demanded Steely.

"I thought you said that the police were onto the crib?" put in Mag Mullins, quietly.

"Who said so?" grumbled Bill.

"No one. I guess I dreamed it," answered Mag.

"Guess you did. You're always a-dreamin' something or other. Wish you'd wake up long enough to help me get that boat straight, and put the Castle in order ag'in. I'm a orderly man, an' I don't like to have my boarding-house all shook up this here way."

Bill Cranch spoke with some irritation. He was wet and uncomfortable, and he felt that he had been ill-used by some one, though he could not exactly make up his mind by whom.

"Well, I've made up my mind to stay in Chromo Castle for a time, until this young Hetherington job has blown over," declared Steely. "So we may as well get inside and out of sight of the river. You never know who is poking about among the shipping out there."

Mag Mullins seized the end of the boat that, upside down, had floated against the planks of the platform, but was powerless to turn it over by herself.

"Give me a hand here, some one," she said, pettishly.

Steely Williams and Bill Cranch responded, and soon had the boat righted. Then the latter bailed it out with a tin can that was fastened to the seat, and picked up the oars that the tide had not been able to carry out into the open river.

Con Joyce sat still on the platform, trying to get his dazed faculties into some sort of order, Steely Williams, knife still in hand, watching him to forestall any belligerent move on his part.

Bill Cranch, in a business-like manner, arranged the tackle of the boat, and soon had it clewed up in its old place under the rafters of the shanty. Now that Dan was safely sleeping in the muddy waters of the East River, and his companion, Joyce, was a prisoner, there was no necessity for the boat. As Steely had said, Chromo Castle was about the safest place in which he could hide himself.

Strangely enough, no one thought of Mr. Hetherington. He had been with Dan Manly and Con when they were forcing an entrance from the platform to the shanty by means of the "West Door." When the brasier fell through the hole he had disappeared, and in the exciting events that followed, he had slipped the memory of every one. Perhaps Dan Manly had thought of him, but if he had, no one could know it now. As for Con Joyce, full of pluck as he was, he had been throttled, and banged, and kicked, and half drowned, and it was no wonder that his ideas were in a hopeless state of confusion. He could not have told his own name without hesitation, and he was not sure that he was his own mother's son, as he said afterward.

"I wonder where—where Double-Curve is by this time," said Steely Williams, with a hollow laugh, as he watched Mag Mullins collecting the coke into the brasier, preparatory to putting it through the "West Door" into the Castle.

"Right under your feet, I guess," she returned, coldly, as she looked at him with an expression that bespoke anything but a friendly regard.

"What?" yelled Steely, starting back as if he had been stung.

"Oh, what are yer talkin' about, Mag? Under his feet! What rot! Why, it's been caught by the undertow and has been carried out pretty near to Staten Island by this time."

"Do you think so, Bill? Do you think so?" asked Steely Williams, with nervous eagerness.

"In course! You put him to sleep, didn't yer, and you saw him go down, didn't yer? Very well, then; if he didn't come up ag'in, why, he must have passed out with the current, and gone out to sea. I don't see what you are botherin' yerself about him for, anyhow."

"The murtherin' villain!" muttered Con Joyce to himself, as he listened to the conversation, and managed to comprehend its purport.

Mag had finished her job of replacing the coke in the brasier by this time, and now taking it by the two handles, requested Cranch to support her behind while she carried it up the short, but perpendicular ladder by which the "West Door" was reached from below, and upon which Con Joyce had been standing when she showered the hot coals upon his head.

In another instant Mag had reached the interior of the shanty and deposited the brasier in its old place, where the fumes could escape through the pipe in the wall.

"All right, Mag?" asked Bill Cranch in a loud whisper.

She did not answer.

"What a sour old cuss she is," grumbled Bill. "But I suppose everything is safe. Watch this fellow, Steely, while I go up," he continued, pointing to Con.

"He's safe enough," was Steely Williams's answer, as he stood over the little Irishman, knife in hand.

Bill Cranch slowly ascended the perpendicular ladder, and was half through the trap, when he uttered an exclamation of surprise, and made a movement to retreat.

Ere he could do so, something descended with crushing force upon his head, and he came tumbling down the steps and fell, a senseless heap, upon the platform.

Then there was a momentary scuffle overhead, a crash, a heavy fall, and—silence!

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEAD FACE IN THE RIVER.

JOHANN VAN DER STRATEN sat peacefully in the stern of his yawl, puffing at his short clay pipe, while two sturdy mariners plied the oars. Dick and Lionel occupied places just in front of the skipper.

"Pull in by der shore," commanded mynheer, briefly. "Dere is too mooch moonlight."

"Yaw," said the stroke oar.

The boat ran in between two vessels that might have been cast in the same mold as Van der Straten's squat schooner, and then, as the boat swung around a group of greasy piles the oarsmen rested and waited for further orders.

The skipper smoked serenely for several minutes without speaking, though his eyes moved continually, showing that he was not inattentive to his surroundings.

"Pull all!" he commanded, suddenly, as he steered directly for a wharf further down the river, where there were no vessels to obstruct the way.

He never stopped smoking, but he pulled from a belt under his large, loose vest a long, old-fashioned navy pistol, which he examined carefully.

"Pretty good weapon, mynheer," remarked Dick.

"Yaw."

"Old-fashioned, though."

"Yaw."

"Do you like it better than a revolver?"

"Yaw."

"May need to use it to-night?"

"Yaw."

"Very well, then. I guess I had better look to mine," observed Dick, taking a six-shooter from his pocket.

"Yaw."

"What have you got with you, Lionel?" asked Dick.

"Nothing. I did not think I should be in need of a weapon to-night."

"No more did I, but I always like to be prepared Eh, mynheer?"

"Yaw. You vhas can't always tell."

"True, mynheer; but where are we going?"

"Wait, an' you vill see right away."

"All right. I suppose you know."

"Yaw."

The Dutchman said this without any assumption of superior knowledge, but simply as corroborating an indisputable fact.

Soon he held up his hand as a signal to his men to stop rowing.

"Vere vas dat gone, eh?"

He was evidently at fault.

"What are you looking for, mynheer?" asked Dick.

"I don't know. It was gone. I see von leetle light, but now—"

He shrugged his broad shoulders as a sign that he did not know where to find the light that had led him to seek for the thieves that he felt sure were in the vicinity, and coolly turned the boat around that he might get back to his ship.

"So much for this adventure," said Dick, putting his revolver out of sight.

"Yaw; it was too bad."

Mynheer looked lovingly at his large, clumsy pistol ere he hid it under his vest, and then nodded to his men to increase their speed.

In a few minutes they were all again on board the De Ruyter.

"Hist! What's that?" exclaimed Lionel Lacey, as he turned to look over the side of the vessel upon the broad river glistening in the fitful moonlight.

Mynheer followed the direction of his finger, and then, with rather more haste than usual, gave the order to lower away the yawl again.

His stolid crew did not express any surprise or impatience at this unexpected command, but lowered away in the same matter-of-fact way that they carried out all their duties.

Mynheer Van der Straten meanwhile kept his eye fixed on the river, smoking furiously from me-e force of habit, but evidently deeply interested in what he saw.

The boat ready, he slid down a rope and took his seat in the stern.

"We can both come, I suppose, mynheer?" questioned Dick.

"Yaw. Queeck."

Dick and Lionel were soon in the boat, and then, obeying a sign from the skipper, the two oarsmen pulled vigorously down the river.

The water was still agitated as the result of the late storm. There is always a strong tide running in the East River, and now it was rather more noticeable than usual.

"It is getting closer to the wharf, I think," remarked Lionel, addressing Van der Straten.

"Yawl!" agreed the skipper, as he pulled on the starboard rudder line and turned the boat a little nearer to the New York shore.

A few minutes more of hard rowing, and then the object upon which the eyes of Lionel Lacey and the captain had been fixed since the former saw it from the deck of the De Ruyter was plainly visible to Dick Worth, who had not been able to make it out.

It was the pale face of a corpse bobbing up and down over and between the waves.

"Some sailor, murdered along the docks or on board some foreign vessel, and thrown into the river for the sharks, I suppose," remarked Dick.

"Yawl!"

"Quite a common thing, I suppose, in your experience, eh, mynheer?"

"Yaw."

The skipper spoke in his usual phlegmatic tone, but he kept his eye steadfastly on the dead face.

"Easy! Back wasser! Dot's right. Yawl!"

The boat was alongside the corpse.

"Heavens! Look, Dick!" exclaimed Lionel Lacey in wild excitement.

"Double-Curve Dan!"

Dick Worth, as he uttered these words leaned over the side of the boat and seized the coat that was floating loosely on the water, and tried to pull the body into the boat.

Mynheer Van der Straten, without saying a word, and still with his short clay pipe between his teeth lent his assistance.

With considerable effort the body of the young pitcher was lifted into the yawl and laid flat in the bottom.

"Dead?" asked Lionel Lacey, in a choking voice, as the skipper gravely felt the pulse and placed his hand over the heart.

"Yaw."

There was sympathy and regret in the monosyllable, simple as it was, and in the round face garnished with the short clay pipe, could be read deep pity for the young fellow thus cut off in the prime of his youth.

Many were the surmises of the two young men as to what concatenation of circumstances had brought Dan Manly to a watery grave so soon after he had been the actor in a game at the other end the city.

"I suppose we had better notify the police," suggested Worth.

"Yawl!"

"There is an officer standing on the wharf over there. I can see his buttons glittering in the moonlight."

It was Lionel Lacey who spoke.

"Pull on," commanded Van der Straten, briefly.

The officer stepped to the edge of the dock as the boat approached.

"Where is the nearest police station?" asked Dick.

"We have picked up the body of a young man, whom we identify. We want him removed to the station for to-night. To-morrow we can try and find his friends."

"Thought you said that you identified him," said the officer suspiciously. "I shall have to take you all to the station."

He took his whistle from his pocket as he spoke and put it to his lips.

"Wait a minute before you whistle. We will all go with you. We can soon show that we are respectable citizens. This is Captain Van der Straten, of the Amsterdam schooner De Ruyter. I am Richard Worth, Captain of the New York Base Ball Club. This is Lionel Lacey, of the same club, and these two men are part of the De Ruyter's crew."

"Who do you recognize the body to be?"

"Daniel Manly, of Albany, and—"

"Wha-a-t?" screamed the officer, forgetting his

suspicious and everything else in the intensity of his agitation. "Daniel Manly. Let me see him."

He jumped from the wharf to the boat, regardless of the risk of such a proceeding, for he nearly went overboard, and kneeling down by the side of the recumbent figure, said, sadly:

"Gentlemen, he left me not more than an hour ago, and told me to wait till he got back. He went on the hunt for a certain crook, and he had two other people with him. He must have had trouble with them and they murdered him and threw him in the sea."

"An hour ago, you say?" remarked Dick Worth.

"Yes, sir. He told me to go to the station and take off my uniform, and come back."

"But you are still wearing your uniform."

"Yes, I made two arrests of disorderlies, and I haven't had time to take it off. He would have called me down on that, I know, for he was very strict about having his orders obeyed."

"I don't understand you quite," put in Lionel Lacey. "What had he to do with giving orders to you?"

"What had he to do with it?" repeated the officer. "Didn't you know that he was a member of the New York Secret Service, and that he stood pretty high in it, too, for all he was so young?"

"I certainly did not."

"Well, you know it now. Though," shaking his head mournfully, "it makes but little difference. He is gone, and by the hand of some one-horse crook that wouldn't be worth the rope it took to hang him."

"A detective!" exclaimed Dick Worth. "I should never have thought that. I knew he was a splendid ball-player. That double-curve of his would have commanded almost any salary for hire."

"Yes, I know he was kind of gone on base-ball, but I never knew him to let it interfere with his business," said the officer, looking down into the pallid face turned straight up to the moon that sailed peacefully in the sky behind a beautiful fleece of clouds.

Mynheer Van der Straten was kneeling by the side of the body, smoking his pipe and apparently taking no notice of the conversation, while his two sailors rested on their oars and stolidly waited for orders.

"Ach!" suddenly grunted the skipper.

"What did you say?" asked Lionel.

But the captain of the De Ruyter did not answer him. He was feeling in one of his capacious pockets for something. He emitted another grunt of satisfaction as he brought forth a small bottle, and gave it a loving shake.

"What's that?" queried Dick.

"Schnapps."

With this laconic explanation Mynheer Van der Straten poured some of the liquor into the hollow of his hand and rubbed it hard on the forehead of the corpse.

"What are you doing that for?" asked the policeman. "Don't you think he is dead?"

"Nein," replied the skipper calmly.

"Not dead?" cried Dick Worth, as he dropped on his knees by the side of Dan Manly's inanimate body and placed his hand over his heart inside his shirt. "No, by heavens! I can feel his heart beating."

"Rub some of dis on his heart," suggested the skipper handing the bottle to Dick.

For ten minutes they tried all the remedies known to them for reviving the apparently drowned, and were finally rewarded by hearing a faint gasp from the patient.

"Hurrah!" yelled Lionel, in ecstasy.

"What's this? There is blood on him," said Dick.

"Yes, here is the trouble. He has been cut on the arm in two places—not very deep, though, in either, fortunately. We'll soon fix this."

The policeman was speaking and tearing up his pocket handkerchief, the while. He bound up the cuts which Steely Williams's knife had made, and which had been kept from Dan's heart by the interposition of his arm at the critical moment.

When Steely had pushed him into the river, as he supposed to certain death, Dan had managed to cling to a log that had happened to float by, and though he had lost consciousness, had instinctively held to it and been carried out into the river with his mouth and nose above water.

It was a narrow escape, and one that Steely Williams little suspected.

"How are you now, Dan?" asked Dick, at last, as the young detective sat up in a dazed condition and looked around him.

Mynheer Van der Straten put the bottle of schnapps to Dan's mouth, and the young fellow revived wonderfully.

He seemed to get his ideas together and to realize thoroughly where he was, for looking at the police officer who knelt at his side, his brows contracted a little, and he demanded, in a weak, but displeased voice:

"Why didn't you obey orders and take off your uniform?"

CHAPTER XII.

DOUBLE-CURVE DAN NONPLUSÉ.

THE officer turned toward Dick Worth with a smile of triumph on his face as Dan Manly chided him.

"What did I tell you about his discipline? Ain't he a dandy. I tell you, he is business all through. Just fancy a man being brought back from the grave, as you may say, and then going for me because I hadn't exactly obeyed orders. I guess he'll have me suspended for a couple of days, or something. I shouldn't be at all surprised. I don't care if he does. He's the best man in the detective service, and everything that he says goes with me."

The officer evidently meant what he said. His admiration for the young detective was unbounded.

Dan fell back in the boat after he had spoken to the officer, but another application to the schnapps bottle revived him, and he lay peacefully in the bottom of the yawl not troubling himself about anything as the two sturdy sailors rowed back to the De Ruyter.

"What next?" asked Dick, as they reached the deck of the schooner, Dan having been almost carried up the ladder by the two sailors.

"Bed," was Mynheer Van der Straten's brief answer, and bed it was.

Dan Manly was completely exhausted, and when the kind-hearted skipper helped him into his own bed, and taking away the young man's wet clothes, gave him a blue woolen shirt to wear that would have held two people of his size, the young detective could only press the large fat hand of mynheer in token of gratitude and fall into a deep, refreshing sleep.

"Yaw, dot is goot. Dot young man vill shleep now. Dot schnapps did it."

He then led Dick Worth and Lacey to another cabin, and, in spite of their protestations that they must go ashore at once, so as to be near the ball ground in the afternoon, made them get each into a bunk, where they, too, were soon sound asleep.

Then he filled his short clay pipe again, and went up on deck for a stroll, and to enjoy a smoke, as he told himself, though he had never stopped puffing tobacco since he opened his eyes in his bunk on the morning before.

It was high noon when the three young men awoke and sat down to the breakfast that Lisa had prepared. Mynheer Van der Straten, looking contented and unconcerned as usual, laid aside his pipe regretfully to partake of the meal with them.

Dan Manly felt almost entirely recovered from the effects of his injuries, his strong constitution only requiring a night's rest to enable him to recuperate from almost any strain upon him.

"Have I slept all these hours?" asked Dan, in surprise, when he learned that it was past 12 o'clock.

"Yaw," answered mynheer, composedly.

"Well, I thank you very much for all that you have done for me. Had you not gone to hunt those river thieves of which you speak I might have drifted out to sea and been drowned in earnest."

"Yaw."

"By the way, what did you see that made you suspect thieves in the neighborhood?"

Mynheer lighted his clay pipe and took two or three whiffs, ere he answered:

"I saw a light."

"Hal! Where?"

"Up by dot dock."

"Yes."

"Then I heard a noise, like a man shouting, and I t'inks it vos time for me to take a handt."

"Yes."

"But ven I got mein boat near der place, I look me out, and I heard no more noise rightt away, and I lost der place."

"Yes; but don't you think it would be possible to find it now, in the daylight?"

"Nein."

The young detective sat wrapped in thought for a few minutes. Then, suddenly arousing himself, he said:

"I must go ashore. Can I have the use of your yawl to carry me to the wharf?"

"Yaw."

"We will go, too," added Dick. "Mynheer, we have had a very lively visit here this time, but I am sorry you have had so much trouble."

"Nein. It was not drouble—it was foon."

"But you have had no sleep."

"Ach! I goes to sleep und I sleeps two, three days already, ven you was gone. I can sleep ven it is all rightt, und I can stay awake ven it was all rightt, sure."

Mynheer Van der Straten replaced his pipe in his mouth and puffed away quietly, with the air of a man who had the best of the argument and did not think it worth while to talk any longer.

"Here is the boat," said Dan, who had been impatiently watching the deliberate motions of the two sailors who were getting it ready. "Come, boys; let's get ashore."

"We shall have to use Al Cratty to pitch this afternoon, I suppose, as you say you have business to attend to to-day," observed Dick Worth, as the three stood on the wharf watching the sailors rowing with steady stroke back to the schooner, where a cloud of smoke rising from the skipper's pipe could now be plainly discerned in the still summer air.

"Yes; I should like to have pitched the game for you, but—I cannot. As you have seen, I have another profession besides that of ball-playing, and tremendous interests are involved in the task I have in hand."

"A big robbery, eh?"

"Yes, and—murder!"

"Murder?"

"Yes; but, never mind. I will see you this evening, after the game, and I wish you success."

"Thank you. I hope you will have success in your undertaking, whatever it is," said Dick Worth, heartily, for he had taken a strong fancy to the young detective.

"Amen!" was Double-Curve Dan's solemn response.

He thought of the fair young girl in the house of mourning, and how he had promised to aid her in securing vengeance for her brother's blood, and he repeated to himself:

"Amen, with all my heart!"

He could not talk about it, and he had not even

told Dick Worth and Lionel Lacey about the tragedy that had been enacted so near the ball grounds, and of which they evidently knew nothing.

Lionel Lacey was standing at the edge of the dock, trying to satisfy himself as to whether the wearer of that blue print apron, who stood on a coil of rope on the deck of the De Ruyter, was waving her handkerchief to him in particular, or only to the party in general.

"She gave me a look that she certainly did not mean for any one else," he muttered, "just before we left the ship. Well, I'll find out before I am much older. Lisa! What a pretty name, I should like her to see me catch a game."

The young man sighed heavily, as Dick Worth took him by the arm and led him away, and his last glance was at the fluttering handkerchief, which still might be meant for Dick as much as for himself, or even for Dan Manly, for that matter.

"I wish she had explained to me what the waving of her handkerchief was to mean," he grumbled, for he was already deeply in love with the pretty Lisa.

"Now for the passage again," thought Dan, when the young men had departed, leaving him standing on the wharf. "It cannot be very far from here, but my brain is not as clear as usual, I am afraid."

He walked out of the wharf, and after a little trouble found that in which the entrance to the underground approach to Chromo Castle was situated. Business was in full swing, and he had to await his opportunity to find the iron plate, lift it, and let himself into the hole.

He accomplished this at last, however, without discovery. Once in the passage, with the iron cover closed down, and he felt safe.

He felt in his pockets for weapons. He found that his clothes had all been carefully dried, and that he had not lost any of his personal possessions. His knife was in its place, and his revolver, which showed that it had been taken apart, cleaned and oiled, was in his belt under his coat, and with the six chambers loaded with fresh cartridges.

"Mynheer Vander Straten, you are a man in a thousand. Perhaps I shall be able to repay you some time or other. A member of the Secret Police Service is not a bad friend to have," he muttered, as he pressed on toward Chromo Castle.

"What became of Mr. Hetherington? I am afraid it went hard with him. I never saw him after that she-devil dropped the hot coals on poor Con's head. How can I ever face Ada again if I go to tell her that she is parentless, as well as brotherless."

Double-Curve Dan was brave, as we have seen, but at the thought of this he pressed his two hands to his forehead and groaned aloud.

Then, with an effort, he strung up his nerves and gritted his teeth, as he resolved to push the hunt for the villain who had slain the bright young boy, if he had to follow him to the very center of the earth.

The plank bridge was reached at last.

Dan reconnoitered carefully from the gloom of the passage. He did not wish to show himself too carelessly. A place like Chromo Castle was likely to be all eyes now that its occupants had found that it was known to the police.

"Not a sound nor a sign. Well, I did not expect that there would be. But they may be inside there, notwithstanding. I wish I had not come alone. But still, it would not be policy to let too many people know of this place. It may be useful to me in the future. These sort of retreats often make nice traps for crooks to walk into, I've noticed."

Double-Curve Dan thus pursued his meditations as he stood back in the passage and took his revolver from his belt ready for action. He was not afraid of making a noise by discharging his pistol. It would not be a bad thing for him, perhaps, if attention were attracted to him. With the scoundrels he was after it was a different thing.

He stepped boldly out on the bridge and waited.

No one appeared from the shanty, and no belligerent move was made by its occupants.

The young detective did not knock at the door. Instead, he let himself down from the bridge upon a projection that would have been hardly noticed by a casual visitor, and by means of other projections that formed a short flight of steps, found himself on the platform by which he had, the night before, reached the "West Door."

Without hesitation he seized a short iron bar, hooked at the end, which was secreted beneath the planks of the platform, and which he had learned, by previous experience, was the "key" to the West Door.

He put one end of the bar in the crack of the trap-door, and by a sudden wrench forced it open.

The door dropped, hanging by hinges on one side.

Dan stood back, revolver in hand, and finger on trigger, ready for an attack.

To his surprise, none was made.

"Um! Mischief!" he muttered. "People who live in places of this kind are always the more dangerous when quiet."

What should he do? He was obliged to confess to himself that he was in a quandary.

Should he climb up to the bridge again and try to bring them out to the door there, retreating into the dark passage as soon as he had thundered at the door?

The idea seemed to be a good one, and for a moment he was disposed to adopt it.

But Double-Curve Dan did not like to be beaten in any line of action that he had once adopted. Therefore he resolved upon a bold course.

Placing his revolver in his belt, he drew his bowie-knife, as being handier to use at close quarters, and placed his foot upon the first of the slats nailed to a post, which made a ladder to the West Door.

He fully expected that as soon as his head was through the hole in the floor above him, he would be attacked by the desperadoes in the castle, but he determined that if he could only keep his right hand free, he would make it interesting for his assailants.

He thought of Ada Hetherington and his oath to hunt down her brother's murderer. The thought of her fair face, and of the trust she had reposed in him, made him forget all danger. Like a cat he ran up the rude ladder and climbed in the Castle.

The shutter to the window was tightly closed, and the room was in darkness save for the little light that came up by way of the West Door.

Dan looked hastily around in the gloom, but could not discern anybody.

Drawing his revolver, and placing his back against the wall nearest the river, he edged along until he reached the window.

With a sudden movement he threw open the shutter and let daylight into the room.

It was entirely empty!

Dan ran to the cupboard by which Mag Mullins had been wont to reach the little lookout window over the bridge.

It was locked, but Dan easily forced the door with his knife. There was no one there.

"Gone!" he exclaimed aloud. "Every one of them. Mr. Hetherington and Con! Where are they?"

Hastily he searched every nook and corner of Chromo Castle, inside and out.

He discovered the boat fastened up under the floor, and laid bare all the secrets of the place. All except one. The papers and money stolen from the Hetherington Bank were no longer in the hiding-place under the floor, to which Bill Cranch had referred as the safe, and of which Mag Mullins had seemed to be the custodian.

Double-Curve Dan's brow grew dark as he stood in the Castle and realized that the precious scoundrels had escaped him, and had perhaps dealt foully with the banker and the little Irishman.

"You have stolen a base on me this time, Wilfred Noel," he muttered as he looked around, "but I'll catch you on the fly and win the game yet, as sure as my name is Dan Manly!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A DEVILISH PLOT.

WHEN Billy the Buffer received the crack on his skull that sent him tumbling down the ladder from the West Door, Steely Williams was so taken by surprise that he could only stand and look at his prostrate friend, without tendering any assistance for the moment.

Then the face of Mag Mullins appeared at the opening, and her harsh tones, calling him by name, broke the spell.

"Steely, come up here."

"What is the trouble?"

"Nothing particular. Is Bill dead?"

She asked this last question with such provoking coolness that it was hardly to be wondered at that Mr. Cranch, who was sitting on the platform rubbing his head, should feel somewhat indignant.

"Dead—nothin'," he growled. "I believe you'd be glad if I was dead, you she-devil. You get meaner every day you live."

"What's that?" croaked Mag, as she flourished her favorite weapon, the iron bar, threateningly.

"Oh, nothin'. I was only sayin' as you was the sweetest critter I ever knew, that's all," returned Bill.

"Come up here, Steely. I want to show you something," said Mag, ignoring the fallen Cranch.

Steely hastily climbed the ladder and stood by the woman's side in the room.

"There he is. What do you think of him?"

She pointed as she spoke to the unconscious form of the banker, which lay stretched upon the floor at Steely's feet.

"Lucky thing for all of us that I am handy with this chunk of metal, or I believe he would have laid out the whole gang. He had been waiting up here for us. It ain't often you find a man of his kind, whose hardest work is sitting in an office, cutting off coupons, as full of fight as this fellow."

"He made Cranch's head ache," observed Steely Williams, calmly. "But that don't matter."

"Not a bit."

"Exactly. But what are we going to do with this individual?" asked Williams, kicking the body of the banker roughly, in mere wanton cruelty.

Ere Mag could answer a loud splash was heard, followed by an exclamation from Bill Cranch.

"What's that?" exclaimed Steely. "Has Cranch tumbled into the river?"

"Darn that Irishman! He's gone!" broke in the voice of Billy the Buffer, with an oath or two attached.

"Where's he gone?" demanded Williams.

"Jumped into the river, that's all I know."

"Why didn't you watch him?"

"I was watching him, but I didn't suppose he was going to sprawl himself into twenty feet of water and get away, especially when he seemed so anxious to keep out of it before," said Cranch in injured tones.

"You're a fool!" declared Mag.

Perhaps Mr. Cranch agreed with the lady. At all events, he did not contradict her.

Steely Williams went down the ladder to the platform and looked out into the river.

"There he is," cried Bill, eagerly. "See him, hobnobbing along between those barges out there. Durn his picture, he swims like a duck."

"Throw me down some pieces of coke," commanded Steely, looking up at Mag, who was peering through the trap from the room above.

"Here, throw these at him," suggested Bill. "Here's his boots. The skunk kicked them off in the excitement, and we never noticed him. That accounts for his swimmin' so easily."

Steely picked up one of the boots, and poising it in his hand in about the same way that he had many a time held the ball in a game, suddenly let it fly at Con's red head.

A boot is not as easy a thing to throw as a base-ball, and Steely Williams's aim, though true, was diverted a little by the awkward shape of the missile. The boot missed Con's head by being about a foot to the right.

"Curse him! I'll catch him this time," hissed Steely, as he took up the other boot and prepared to launch it at the escaping Irishman.

"I'd give five dollars to see you fetch him," observed Bill Cranch, who had forgotten the peril in which they stood, and in fact, everything else, in his interest in Steely Williams's skill as a marksman.

"I will fetch him," declared the other, gritting his teeth. "I never saw anything weighing under ten pounds that I couldn't put just where I wanted it."

He turned the boot over and over in his hand to secure just the hold upon it that he desired, and took a long look at Con's head, bobbing up and down in the moonlight, a goodly distance away by this time.

Suddenly the boot went whizzing through the air straight for its mark.

Con turned at this instant, saw the boot coming, and—dived.

Steely Williams's aim had been true this time, for the boot struck the water at the very spot occupied by the Irishman's head a few seconds before. Nothing but his dropping under water saved him from a blow that would probably have rendered him senseless, and resulted in his drowning.

"Och! Be jabers. Ye are a fine one," he spluttered, as he appeared on the surface again, and looked back at Bill Cranch and Steely. "Can't you let a gentleman take his morning bath widout thryin' to scare the daylight outen him?"

"Give me a piece of coke, Mag," howled Steely, beside himself with rage.

The hag hastily handed him a lump as big as his fist, but it was too late. Con had swum around a barge, and was out of sight.

"He's gone, sure!" observed Cranch philosophically. Now, what?"

"Why, to get away from this in short order. That's what, of course," broke in the voice of Mag Mullins. "Here's his Money-bags up here, waking up, too. You'd better come up, Steely."

Steely Williams did not answer. He simply climbed the ladder and entered the Castle.

Mr. Hetherington was sitting up on the floor, looking from one to the other.

"You villain!" he exclaimed, as he realized that Steely Williams was the Wilfred Noel who had slain his son.

Steely's fingers played with the handle of the dirk that lay concealed in his sleeve, but he restrained himself. Murderer as he was, he did not desire to add another crime to his list, unless he was obliged. "There is nothing to be gained by hard words," he said.

"How can you look me in the face?" demanded the banker, as he sprang to his feet, and seized the other by the throat.

Steely Williams shook himself, and Bill Cranch, who had followed him up the ladder, threw his arms around Mr. Hetherington's waist and pulled him away.

"Slove him in here," suggested Mag, in her matter-of-fact way, as she opened the little cupboard where the ladder led to the lookout.

Bill Cranch did so, and the door being locked, the three worthies held a hasty council of war.

"There's the ranch at the Palisades," observed Bill. "That is safe for awhile."

"Yes, and it's a little nearer Sing Sing than Chromo Castle," said Mag, grimly.

"Never mind about that, Mag. You're always a-savin' something uncomfortable," grumbled Bill.

"How can we get there?" asked Steely.

"Yes, and what in thunder are we to do with that noisy cuss in there," added Bill, pointing to the door of the cupboard at which the banker was banging and kicking lustily.

"We can get there easily enough," declared Mag.

"And we can soon stop his noise," said Steely with a scowl, as he showed his dirk-knife for a moment with a significant movement.

"Needn't do that, Steely. It's dangerous. I have a better scheme," remarked Mag.

"What is it?"

"We can take an early train at Forty-second street for Yonkers in the morning."

"Well?"

"When we get there we know where our skiff is lying, don't we?"

"Yes. Well?"

"We can row across the ruin to the ranch on the Jersey side."

"Of course. That is all right. But what about that old cuss in there?"

"Take him with us."

"Take—him—with—us?"

"That is what I said."

"But—how? We never can do that, unless we want to bring up in a police-station, all three of us. Why, you must be crazy."

"Not at all. It's as easy as—as—the Irishman jumping into the river."

"Confound the Irishman! But how can we take old Hetherington? What's your plan?"

"A very simple one. You and Bill are officers attached to a private lunatic asylum over in Jersey and—"

"By gracious! I see it!" broke in Bill, slapping his thigh.

"Oh, you do, eh?" sneered Mag. "Well, it isn't very often that you can see anything."

"Go on," said Steely.

"We are taking a poor lunatic to this private asylum. You and Billy are officers, and I am a sister of the patient going along to see that he is not ill-treated, and that the room he is to have at the asylum is comfortable and well furnished. And I am all broken up over my poor brother's affliction. I cannot bear to have people lo king at him, and I won't let anybody talk to him, because it excites him, and makes him much worse. Do you see?"

The three joined in a hearty laugh, and Bill Cranch, standing back a little, looked at the charming Mrs. Mullins from head to foot, and exclaimed rapturously:

"Mag, you're a daisy, that's what you are, and I'll have to make you Mrs. Cranch some day, as a reward for all your smartness. You're an ornament to your sex, an' a credit to human nature."

"Shut up," was the gracious response.

"Your plan sounds very well, but I do not know exactly how we are going to get through the streets of New York and into the railroad car without being stopped. Then, besides, I have no desire to be recognized. I suppose there is a description of me in the hands of every officer in New York by this time," said Steely Williams, with a frown.

"Leave the direction of this thing to me and it will be all right," was Mag Mullins's confident reply. "Bill, what time does the first train go out to Yonkers in the morning?"

"About seven o'clock."

"Seven! That leaves us four hours. Bill, you have the carriage at the wharf inside of half an hour."

The woman spoke authoritatively. She had taken the whole management of the matter on her own shoulders.

"In half an hour," repeated Bill, dubiously.

"Yes. Go straight to his house and tell him to hitch up at once."

"I'll go, but I hate to drag a man out of bed at four o'clock in the morning," grumbled Billy the Buffer. "He'll be as mad as a wet hen, too, I know."

"Never mind about his being mad. He is a member of the Order, and it is his duty to obey," replied Mag, impatiently. "Now, git!"

Bill Cranch said not another word, but dropping out of sight by way of the West Door, made his way circuitously to the bridge and dark passage that led to the street, some blocks away.

He was going to the house of a hack-driver in the pay of the crooked fraternity of New York, and whose fidelity was assured by his being a member of the secret Order so often referred to in these pages.

"That fellow has too much to say," muttered Mag, as Cranch disappeared. "I'm afraid I shall have to pass him over to the cops some time."

"What do you say?" asked Steely, as he shut down the West Door and looked around quickly.

"Nothing."

"I thought I heard you say something about handing over. If I thought there was the least idea of treachery in your shriveled carcass, I'd—I'd—have another dead person to answer for!" he hissed, savagely.

"I didn't say anything of the kind!" declared the woman, sullenly. "I'm not giving away or handing over anything. You needn't be afraid of me."

Steely looked at her for an instant from beneath his black eyebrows, and then, with a toss of the head, answered:

"I believe you. Excuse my hasty remark."

"Oh, that's all right," was her careless response, adding inwardly:

"But Mag Mullins never forgets hard words, all the same."

She hobbled over to the cupboard, in which the banker had now ceased his noise, and threw open the door.

The captive bounded out and flew at Steely Williams, but the latter drew his ever-ready dirk and kept his assailant at bay.

"Not so fast, Mr. Hetherington!" he sneered. "Keep off, please!"

"You wretch! I will hang you before you are a month older!"

Steely Williams's only reply was a sardonic laugh. At the same moment Mag Mullins, who was standing behind the banker, threw a loop of strong rope over his head and shoulders, and, pulling it tight by means of a slip-knot, held him a helpless prisoner.

Vainly the banker tried to release himself. Every movement only made the cord cut into his flesh, while the woman pulled at it and laughed tantalizingly at his efforts to escape.

"Throw him down if he doesn't keep quiet," suggested Steely, coolly.

"You infernal villain, I'll—"

A nod from the evil wretch facing him, and Mag dextrously threw another coil of the long rope about him, catching him just below the knees, with the natural result of throwing him heavily to the floor.

"Now, stay there!" hissed Steely, bending down to look into his face, "until we are ready to take you away."

"Take me away? Where to?"

"Where to? Why, to a private lunatic asylum! That's the best place for you."

"What?" shrieked the banker, as his blood seemed to turn to ice in his veins. "You would never dare to do that?"

"Wouldn't we? You'll see! Ha! There's somebody at the door. Who is it, Mag?"

The woman hastily reached the lookout in the cupboard, and cried:

"Why, it's Bill, back already. And he's got the coachman with him."

"Good! Now, Mr. Hetherington, you make the least noise from the time you leave this place, and it will mean—this!" whispered Steely Williams, flashing his knife before his captive's eyes. "Open the door, Mag."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BANKER IN VERY BAD HANDS.

"HERE we are," said Bill Cranch.

He led in a man dressed in the ordinary garb of a New York hackman, with a large overcoat enveloping him nearly to his feet and a slouch hat pulled down over his brows. As if this were not enough concealment, he had a big blue handkerchief tied over his chin into which he had sunk his features until nothing but the tips of his nose and a pair of restless eyes were visible.

The two men stood by the door as soon as they were admitted into the Castle, while Billy the Buffer explained his speedy return.

"Saw the hack just by the wharf as soon as I got out of the passage, an' then I found the driver who had some job on hand, and who was standing on a street corner half a block away, looking for some one, I suppose. He always was a quiet sort of fellow, and I can't get him to tell me what he was out for."

"It was none of your business," put in Mag. "The Order doesn't give anybody the privilege of asking questions of members."

The driver, standing by the door, grunted his approval of Mag Mullins's words, and Bill Cranch looked disgusted, as he proceeded:

"Well, anyhow, I told him he had to come with me, an' here he is."

"That is enough talk," said Steely, impatiently. "Here, you, Mr. Driver, whatever your name is, help this gentleman to the carriage. You understand?"

The driver nodded. He did not care about wasting words:

"He's an invalid."

"Oh, you scoundrel!" cried Mr. Hetherington.

"Shut up," commanded Mag, as she took a shawl from a nail and tied it over the banker's head, so as to prevent his making any noise.

The driver made a slight movement, as if to assist Mag, but stopped.

"Never mind, I can manage him," observed Mag, sweetly, in recognition of the driver's politeness.

"He's an invalid," resumed Steely. "His mind is affected, and we want to take him to the Central Depot. He is going up in the country for treatment. You understand, I suppose?"

Again the driver nodded.

"Well, take hold of him. And, Mag, you close up the house. Bill, help the driver with the patient."

Cranch and the driver took the banker by the arms and raised him to his feet. He struggled desperately, but bound as he was, could not help himself in any way.

In a few minutes he was in a close carriage, and being driven rapidly through the streets.

By his side sat Bill Cranch, with Steely Williams and Mag Mullins on the opposite seat. The shawl still covered his head, but as an additional precaution against rescue, the blinds were pulled down closely, and the hack had every appearance of being empty.

Before starting Steely had instructed the driver to drive around the street by a circuitous route so as to reach the depot about the time the train was to start. It was not desirable to have the patient in the depot longer than could be helped.

The hack bumped and rumbled along for a time until it struck into Broadway, and rolled rapidly up town.

"Say, Steely, where is this fellow taking us? I don't think we want to go on Murray Hill, do we?"

"Murray Hill did you say?" ejaculated Steely.

"No, indeed. Why, curse the fellow. He's stopping. And here's Hetherington's house. What does it mean—I vow—Say, who is this driver? Is he safe?"

Without waiting for an answer to his question, Steely Williams burst open the door of the hack and reached the sidewalk, just as the driver leaping from his seat ran up the steps of the mansion upon the door-post of which swung the mournful black and white crape, insignia of the reign of death within.

"Stop!" hissed Steely.

"Shtop yerself," was the reply of the driver, in a strong brogue. "Phwat did ye take me fer? Begorra, I've cotched yez this time, sure."

"Come back, or I'll cut you in two," said Steely savagely, seizing the other by the skirt of his long coat and pulling him backward.

"Indade an' I'll not kim back. Be jabers, it's not Con Joyce will kim back whin yerself orders it, now. d'ye moind," replied the driver, as he slipped out of his long coat, and thundered at the door.

"Curse him! He'll bring out the whole house!" muttered Steely, as he made a vicious lunge at the Irishman's back.

He missed his aim, however, and beyond slitting the jacket worn by the other, and which, with the rest of his clothes, was still soaked with water, did no harm to his intended victim.

Another bang, and the door opened.

"Oh, Miss Ada, it's yerself is it? Sure the bloody-minded villains has your pap in that there conveyance, an' he's tied up, an' they are goin' to murder him, an' I fooled 'em. They thought I was the

reg'lar dthriver, an' I kim here wid the hack. The reg'lar dthriver was some place or ither gettin' dhrunk, I guess, an' they'll have me arrested for st'alain' the hack, I s'pose, an' I don't care. Hur-rool!

Con Joyce delivered himself of these disjointed sentences in a perfect whirlwind of excitement, and taking Ada by the hand, dragged her down the steps toward the vehicle.

"Ada!" cried her father's voice, as having torn the shawl from his face by a superhuman effort the banker, leaned out of the door and recognized his daughter.

Ere he could carry out his intention and spring from the hack, he was violently pulled back, the door shut with a bang, and Steely Williams who had already mounted to the driver's seat, seized the reins and whip and lashing the horses with all his might, drove the carriage furiously away.

"All right, Mr. Hetherington. This means more trouble for you. Curse that Irishman! I don't see how we could have allowed ourselves to be fooled by him. I'll make it hot for that fool of a Bill Cranch, too, when I get safely through this job. I can't afford to do it now, though. I must keep friends with everybody for a while. But I am afraid my days of usefulness in this part of the country are over for a year or two."

Thus musing, Steely Williams drove with the ease of a experienced horseman, up and down side streets, avoiding the main thoroughfares until he had placed several miles between the hack and Murray Hill. He did not continue his fast gait longer than necessary to escape possible pursuit, for he was of all things anxious to avoid notice and an arrest for fast driving would have been fatal to him.

In the carriage Bill Cranch and Mag Mullins had between them, secured the banker again, tying him with the rope and putting the big overcoat that had been pulled off Con Joyce over his hands, thus giving him the appearance of being confined in a strait-jacket, without any suggestion of cruelty. It was not desirable to make accidental spectators aware that the banker was anything but an insane patient in the care of loving friends.

The shawl was not put over his head again, but a wedge of wood, produced by Bill Cranch from an inner pocket, and used by him in former cases when it was necessary to keep a victim silent, was thrust into the banker's mouth, whence, owing to its peculiar shape, it was impossible for him to remove it without assistance.

"What shall we do now?" cogitated Steely. "That Irishman knows all about our plans and there will be a dozen officers on the lookout for us at Forty-second street. That certainly won't do. We didn't give away where we were going to take him to, that's one consolation. Ha! I have it. We'll just drive straight out to Yonkers, or a little beyond, get the skiff, which is always in its place under the rocks there and row across. That will be better than taking the train, anyhow."

He turned his horses which were both fresh, and good for more than the seventeen miles to Yonkers, and started them on their journey.

Such good time did they make that it was still early in the morning when the carriage rattled through Broadway in that pretty little town, and struck into the suburbs.

A quiet spot above the railroad track was reached—a spot where the handsome residences were hidden behind shrubbery and large trees and where not a soul was to be seen at that hour in the morning.

Steely pulled up his horses and looked through the front window into the carriage.

Bill Cranch was fast asleep, but Mag Mullins kept a close watch upon the prisoner, and at each of his restless movements was ready to pounce upon him with a short, handy billy that she had put in her pocket for a weapon in the absence of her favorite iron bar.

"Wake him up," commanded Steely.

Mag Mullins coolly pinched Bill Cranch's arm, causing him to wake up with a screeching string of oaths that would surely have attracted attention had not the carriage been in such a lonely spot.

"Shut your mouth, or I'll cut it clean around to the back of your neck," said Steely, sternly.

"Oh, all right, Cap. But this durned old woman very nearly bored a hole in my arm."

"I'd bore a hole in your head for two cents," retorted Mag, who always resented being called an old woman.

"Stop quarrelling there, and attend to me," interrupted Steely. "I am a little nervous about rowing across the river, now in broad daylight. We don't know who is on our track. Our boat would be seen, and we should very likely be traced right to the ranch if we went across now."

"Well?" queried Mag.

"Well, I think the best thing to do will be to lie quiet somewhere until dark. Then we can get across and be in the ranch in Jersey before anyone knows that we have even left New York."

"Good scheme, if it can be worked," growled Billy the Buffer who was still smarting under the injury inflicted upon him by the charming Mullins.

"It can be worked," said Steely, coolly.

"Where shall we go?"

"I have a friend a mile or two back in the country, who will do anything for Steely Williams. He is an independent old man, who cultivates his little bit of land for pleasure."

"Um!" observed Mag, doubtfully.

"That is what people say who are casually acquainted with him," added Steely, significantly.

"Ah!" from Bill Cranch.

The foregoing conversation had been carried on in whispers at the carriage door, so that the banker

could not hear it, though Mag took care to be within easy reach of him should he make any attempt to escape. He seemed, however, to have sunk into a semi-unconscious state, and did not make any objection by action or word, to his present treatment.

"Now," Steely Williams went on, "We will drive out to my friend's house by a quiet road that I know of, put this gentleman in the cellar, give the horses some fodder, and take a few hours' sleep. In the evening we can drive down to the river again in my friend's covered wagon, and—"

"And fool the whole crowd, eh?" interrupted Bill Cranch ecstatically.

"Exactly."

Not another word was exchanged. Mag and Cranch took their places in the carriage again, and Steely Williams, mounting to the driver's seat, sent the horses at a fast trot along an uphill road into the country.

Up a long hill, down into a valley, a sharp turn to the left along a lane hardly wide enough for the carriage to go, up another hill and down into a hollow.

"There's the house at last," muttered Steely to himself.

A long, low frame building, with quaint, old-world gables and a tall brick chimney at each end, like sentinels. A row of poplars swayed in the gentle summer breeze in front, shaking their green leaves and sending showers of silvery water gathered from the rain of the night before.

It was a peaceful scene, and it was difficult to realize that it was the home of a man at war with the law, as Steely had intimated.

To the right of the house and somewhat to the rear was a barn, around which a brood of chickens chirped and clucked, while a couple of comfortable sows and half a dozen young pigs grunted in a satisfied manner in an adjacent hog-pen.

Steely drove up to the old-fashioned front door, with its two solid wooden seats under the porch and called:

"Mat!"

There was no answer.

"Mat! Confound the old fool! He always was as deaf as a post, but he must have seen the carriage coming, and he is not such a fool after all. He knows the look of it well enough, and would never mistake it for any other."

"Ain't he at home?" asked Cranch, putting his head through the front window of the vehicle.

"I don't know. But I soon will," answered Steely, getting down from his seat.

He banged and kicked at the door viciously, but without any response from within.

"Must be out," suggested Bill, in an interested tone, still with his head out of the carriage window.

"The old fool!" ejaculated Steely, as summoning all his strength, he put his knees and foot against the door and pushed.

There was a loud laugh from Bill Cranch, as the door suddenly gave way and Steely disappeared headfirst into the house.

"You'd better not laugh too loud," was Mag Mullins's warning. "He is in an ugly temper, and he uses that knife of his quickly when he gets mad."

Bill Cranch laughed sneeringly, but he did not let Steely Williams hear him. The dark-browed young man managed to strike awe into the bosoms of his companions without effort.

He came to the door after being absent a few minutes and motioned to Cranch to get out of the carriage.

"Well, Steely, what now?"

"The house is empty, but we will stay here till evening, anyhow."

"That's a good joke. We'll keep house for old Mat to-day."

"Bring in old Moneybags. We must make him safe. Luckily I know this house pretty well, and I can soon find an apartment for him where he can be undisturbed until we want him," interrupted Steely Williams, ruthlessly cutting short the Buffer's raptures.

"All right, Cap. Mag, kick him out of the carriage."

CHAPTER XV.

DAN MAKES A DOUBLE PLAY.

"You are never going to keep me in a place like this, are you?" exclaimed the banker in horror, as five minutes later, the gag having been taken from his mouth, he was thrust into a dark cellar that appeared to have been hewn out of the solid rock.

"Yes, sir, this is where you will have to stay for a few hours. I am sorry that I cannot give you a better room, but I have to look after my own safety you know," answered Steely Williams, who with Cranch and Mag Mullins, had brought the prisoner down the stone steps from the kitchen above.

Mr. Hetherington looked at the young ruffian for a moment, as if seeking in his face some sign of human feeling. Then, turning away, he murmured to himself, as the tears welled to his eyes: "My boy! my boy! I cannot even be with you for the few hours that you will yet be out of the grave!"

Steely overheard the words, and, wincing slightly, he frowned and walked up the stone steps, bidding his companions follow him.

"Fasten that door with the bar as well as the bolt," he commanded, but without looking around.

"All right, Cap," responded Bill, cheerfully. He had not committed a murder, and such a simple proceeding as keeping a New York banker a prisoner for a day or two gave him pleasure, if anything.

The door was secured in the manner indicated and a trap at the top of the stone steps, which was in fact part of the kitchen floor, was shut down and fastened with two sunken bolts.

The house consisted of four rooms, one behind the other, on the ground floor, with a loft overhead, and the stone cellar under the kitchen.

It was comfortably though not luxuriously furnished, and looked like the home of a comfortable farmer.

The kitchen was immediately behind the sitting-room, and behind the kitchen were the bed-rooms.

The bed in the room behind the kitchen had evidently been occupied, while the fact that a low fire still burned in the kitchen stove, and that there was a loaf of fresh bread, with butter, eggs and other materials for a meal on the table, indicated that some one had slept in the house during the night, and had taken breakfast previous to a hurried departure.

"Mat must have had some business in town to-day, I guess, or perhaps he just took a notion to go out in a hurry. He's an eccentric old cuss, and is likely to do anything, if the fit takes him," observed Steely, as he put some light wood in the stove and coaxed it into a blaze.

"Mag, make some coffee, won't you?" asked Cranch. "We haven't had anything to eat or drink since last night, and I should like to sample the old man's grub."

The lovely Mullins, in her matter-of-fact way, did as Cranch requested, and soon had a nice breakfast of ham and eggs and coffee ready.

"Take some down to Mr. H," said Steely, when the meal was ready. "I don't want to starve him, and in fact I would rather treat him well than otherwise. It wasn't my fault that I killed his boy. It was all the doings of that infernal Dan Manly."

During these remarks, which were addressed more to himself than to his companions, Mag Mullins prepared a plate of ham and eggs, with bread and coffee, and waved her hand as a sign that everything was ready.

Bill Cranch, obedient to the command of Steely Williams, took the food down to Mr. Hetherington, and coming up, reported that he had left it on a bench underneath the one strongly-barred window that gave a little light to the cellar.

"Is he eating and drinking?" asked Steely.

"Yes, he is now; but at first he told me to take it all away, because he wasn't hungry."

"Well?"

"But I didn't take no notice. I just planked it down on the bench, and pointed my thumb at it to signify that he could eat it or leave it, just as he happened to feel."

"Yes?"

"He thought better of it then, for he walked up to the bench, and commenced on the ham and eggs as if he wanted to choke himself, washing it down with the hot coffee like a crazy man."

"Sensible," observed Steely, sentimentally.

"Sensible, eh? I don't see nothin' sensible in eatin' and drinkin' that way. I wants to take my meals like a Christian."

The three worthies paid their respects to the ham and eggs and coffee in a business-like way, and then, the meal concluded, Steely Williams suggested that they should all take a sleep until evening, or until the mysterious proprietor of the house came home.

Mag was given the rear room, and Bill Cranch and Steely hrew themselves side by side upon the bed in the other apartment, which, as stated above, had evidently been occupied during the night.

Tired out with the exciting events of the last few hours, all were sound asleep within half an hour, the last to succumb to the wooing of the drowsy god being Steely Williams, notwithstanding that he had been more exhausted than any of them.

But the consciousness that he had now irrevocably forfeited all hope of winning the girl whose purity and beauty had made so strong an impression upon his heart; that she looked upon him now only as the murderer of her brother, and that she was even now helping to hunt him to the gallows, kept him awake, and when at last he did fall into the slumber of utter exhaustion, followed him into his dreams, and made his sleep but a succession of nightmares.

Hour after hour the three slept, Bill Cranch snoring vigorously, and evidently taking all the comfort that is to be found in a heavy slumber after hard work.

The sun was getting low in the heavens when a man, wrapped in a large cloak, his face partly concealed by the flapping brim of a wide felt hat, came hobbling down the road and walked into the porch of the house.

He carried a thick walking-cane in his hand, with which he banged on the door three or four times.

"What's that?" cried Steely Williams as, knife in hand, he sat up on the bed and listened.

He had heard the knocking in his sleep, but had not realized just what it was.

Another banging at the door told him what had disturbed him.

He leaped from the bed, and punching the snoring Cranch in the side, soon had that gentleman as wide awake as himself.

"Somebody at the door, Bill," he whispered.

"Well, what of it? Does he want to come in?"

"Yes."

"Well, let him in if he's safe."

Steely ran into the front room, and peeping through the slats of the shutters at the window, saw the figure standing in the porch and just raising his stick to bang again at the door.

"Well, that's a joke on me," he exclaimed, with a laugh. "It's old Mat himself, trying to get into his own house. Open the door, Bill."

Cranch obeyed, and the old man stumbling into the room, threw himself upon the sofa just as he was, cloak and hat and all, and asked for a drink of water.

The shutters being closed the room was in gloom,

but Cranch, who had never met Mat before, saw that he was a little old man, with a decided bump on his back, and that he was not of a very sociable disposition.

"Get him some water, Bill," commanded Steely Williams.

Billy the Buffer went for the water into the yard, where a pump gave promise of a cool draught.

"Well, Mat, we have taken possession of the house but we are going away again at dark."

"Yes, I heard about you," was the reply in a wheezy whisper.

"The deuce you did! Who told you?"

"Never mind. I heard it."

"Your asthma is just as bad as ever, eh?"

"Just as bad," wheezed Mat, turning himself over on the sofa, so that his back was toward Steely.

"You're good for a number of years yet, though!" said Steely, encouragingly.

"Oh, yes, I hope so."

"Durn your old picture. If you live six months I shall be surprised," was the other's comment, under his breath.

"What's that?" asked Mat, quickly.

"Nothing, I only coughed," adding to himself: "By gracious, he isn't as deaf as he used to be, anyhow. Didn't think he could hear me whisper."

"Here's some water," interrupted Bill Cranch, as he brought in a pitcher and handed it to the old man.

"Thanks. What's your name?" asked old Mat, from his sofa, trying to make out Bill Cranch's features, apparently, in the gloom.

"Mr. Smith," replied Bill, with a laugh.

"Mr. Smith? Ah, yes; hope we shall become better acquainted. I have taken a fancy to you, Mr. Smith."

Bill did not seem flattered by this preference of old Mat's, for he tried to withdraw his hand from the grasp of the other, who had taken hold of his fingers as he spoke, and held them with a grip of iron.

"You shake hands pretty hard, Mr.—Mr.—Mat," said Bill Cranch. "You must have been very strong when you were young."

"Pretty well—pretty well, Mr. Smith. I guess I could hold my own, Mr. Smith."

"And you can do it now, can't you?" put in Steely Williams.

"Yes, Steely, I can," was the quick reply, given in a voice strangely free from his usual wheeze.

"Cranch, go out to the stable and attend to the horses, will you? We must start before long," said Steely. "I will go down and see how our man is in the cellar."

"What man?"

"Oh, somebody who needs country air," answered Steely, significantly. "So I am going to take him to our summer resort in Jersey, to remain while I transact some business on the other side of the Rocky Mountains, or perhaps further than that."

"Ah!"

"I suppose you don't care to know all the particulars, eh, Mat? I knew you were all right, and that if I came here in the name of the Order you would make us welcome."

"Sure. But—what's his name?"

"Hetherington."

The old man on the sofa started.

"You know him, of course," observed Steely; "but you didn't think I could persuade him to leave New York and spend a day in your cellar, did you? Well, it is his own fault. He forced himself upon me, and I was compelled to entertain him. That's all."

"Yes, yes; I see. You're a great Steely," said the old man. "You are going down to take a look at him, eh? I'll go with you."

"All right. Come along."

And Steely Williams, without wasting any more words, turned and left the room, followed by the old man.

It was quite dark now, and Steely fumbled about for a light.

"Thought I saw a lamp in the kitchen. Where do you keep your matches, Mat?"

"Pull up the trap and go down the steps. I have a bull's-eye lantern here that we can use," was the response.

Steely did as the other requested, and Mat drew a dark-lantern from beneath his long cloak, and followed down the steps.

"What are you shutting down the trap for?" asked Williams. "It's as dark as pitch in here now."

"Open the door of the cellar. Then you'll have plenty of light. Besides, my lantern is alight."

Mat turned a stream of light on the bolts and bars of the door as he spoke, and his companion opened the door and went into the cellar.

Mr. Hetherington was sitting on the bench under the window, his arms folded, and apparently in deep thought. He started as he saw his visitors.

"What do you want? How much longer am I to stay in this place?" he demanded, as the flash of the lantern fell full on his face.

"We have come to take you out now. We want you to go for a little ride with us," answered Steely.

"You shall pay dearly for this," returned the banker, trembling with rage. "Such an outrage cannot take place in New York without being followed by swift punishment. There are men who will soon hunt you down. They know that you are instrumental in keeping me from home, and—"

"I presume that you refer to Mr. Manly—Double-Curve Dan. Well, he is safe enough. Don't you trouble about him."

"This is the gentleman you want to take over to Jersey, is it, Steely?" wheezed Mat.

"This is the gentleman."

"How are you going to take him?"

"Oh, I suppose we shall have to submit him to the inconvenience of a rope and gag. I am sorry to be compelled to adopt such extreme measures, but his turbulent manner renders it necessary."

"You villain!" shouted the banker.

"What's that?" exclaimed Steely, savagely, half-drawing his dirk-knife.

"Keep cool, my boy, keep cool!" wheezed Mat. "Hard words never broke any bones."

"You're right," answered Steely, replacing his knife. "I was a fool to notice him."

"Of course you were. But—see here. I have something better than rope to fasten him. What do you think of these?"

Mat produced a pair of nickel-plated handcuffs, and held them toward Steely.

"Hold the lantern a minute, and turn the lights on them, so that I can show you how they work," continued the old man.

Steely took the lantern, and Mat opened the handcuffs and held them in the light.

"Ain't they pretty?"

"Yes, very good. Where did you get them?"

"Oh, I always keep such things handy. One never knows when they may be useful."

"That's true."

"Yes, suppose you get in a tight place with some fellow, and you are afraid that he may give you trouble, why— Look out for that lantern. It has a habit of falling apart. It's pretty old. Take both hands to it."

"How do you mean. How can it fall apart?" asked Steely, as he put both hands to it.

"Like a flash Mat snapped the handcuffs around the other's two wrists, which were close together, as he held the lantern.

A fearful oath from Steely Williams, a sudden twist of Nat's foot, and the discomfited villain lay at full length on the cellar floor.

"What do you mean by this?" shrieked Steely. "What is your game?"

"A game that I have won!" came back the answer, in clear, manly tones, as Mat threw off his big cloak and slouch hat, and turned the lantern full upon his own face.

"What!" howled Steely, putting up his manacled hands in horror. "Impossible! It cannot be—"

"Excuse me, but it is. Double-Curve Dan, at your service."

CHAPTER XVI.

A HOME RUN FOR THE PITCHER-DETECTIVE.

"DAN!" cried Mr. Hetherington, and grasping the hand of the young pitcher. "Who would have expected you to be here?"

"Never mind that now. Here is a revolver and a handy billy. I had to be careful, or these wretches would have stopped my game. I got information that you were here, and I came on alone, though I expect Con is somewhere in the neighborhood. We came on horseback, and Con had some trouble in managing his horse. So I left him to come along as well as he could, for I was impatient to get here."

"Dan, how can I ever repay you?"

"We won't talk about that now. I want to get you out of this quickly. I don't know how many of the gang are about."

"What about this fellow?" asked the banker, pointing to Steely Williams, who had arisen and was leaning against the wall by the side of the door. Dan Manly turned the light of his lantern upon him, as he said:

"We will leave him here for the present. Get over here, Steely, away from the door."

Steely obeyed sullenly, and Dan opened the door for himself and the banker to pass out.

As he did so somebody struck him a blow in the chest that staggered him, and Bill Cranch's voice yelled:

"Not this trip, Mr. Double-Curve Dan. I got onto you from the first, but I just thought I'd wait to see how far you would go."

As he spoke he sprang at Dan's throat, and the two men were at once locked in deadly embrace. Cranch had the advantage of size and strength, but Dan was as lithe as an eel, and soon twisted himself out of the other's grasp.

Standing at the foot of the steps holding a lamp that shed a strong light all over the cellar, was Mat Mullins. He did not seem to be at all excited, but just waited coolly to see the result of the contest.

All this took place in much less time than it occupied to tell it.

The banker sprang forward to help Dan, and at the same instant Steely raised his hands and brought down his handcuffs on Mr. Hetherington's shoulders missing his head by little more than a hair's breadth.

"Curse these handcuffs!" howled Steely. "I'd soon fit you if I had my hands free. Mag, in the name of the Order, I ask you to help me!"

The woman put the lamp on the steps and in her usual unconcerned manner, slipped up behind the banker and struck him a blow with her handy billy that stretched him senseless at her feet.

Cranch had by this time got Dan in a firm grip again, and was holding him down in a corner, where the young detective was absolutely helpless.

"Mag, crack his skull with that handy billy," commanded Steely. "Then I'll feel in his pockets for a key to these bracelets. I suppose he has one about him somewhere."

The woman walked over to the corner where the two men were struggling apparently with the amiable intention of carrying out Steely's instructions, when a big stone came flying down the stairs

and striking her full on the back between the shoulders, doubled her up like a jack-knife."

"Arrah! now, ye spalpeen, I thought as I c'n'd fetch yez," cried a cheerful voice, and Con Joyce jumped into the cellar.

Bill Cranch in surprise, released Dan for an instant, and the young man sprang to his feet.

"Oho! Muster Dan! Is that yerself? Och, begorra I ain't had so much diversion since I left the ould sod. Git out, ye dhirty spalpeen," he added, as he fired a shot from a revolver so close to Billy the Buffer's head as to make that gentleman drop to the floor in a hurry.

"Throw up your hands, Cranch. The game is up," commanded Dan sternly, as he took another pair of handcuffs from his pocket.

Bill Cranch hesitated, and then, flying at Dan again threw him down.

"Now, shoot, if you want to," he yelled to Con.

"Not by a durned soight. Faith, I'd jist as loikely to be hittin' the wrenge wan, d'ye moind."

"Look out. Look out! Watch him, Con," cried Dan, breathlessly, as he rolled over and over in his struggle with Cranch, but managed to see what was going on, notwithstanding.

"Watch what? I don't understand yez," returned Con, bewildered, as he still sought an opportunity to put a bullet into Billy the Buffer without injuring the young detective.

"Shut yer mouth," put in Cranch, as he managed to get his knuckles into Dan's throat, nearly strangling him.

A noise on the steps made Con turn.

Och! Begorra! That murderin' villain is gettin' away. Well, now, kim right back."

He fired a shot, but the only result was a mocking laugh from Steely Williams, who had reached the top of the steps, and was just disappearing through the trap into the kitchen.

"He's gone, begorra!" exclaimed Con.

"No, he isn't," shouted a voice in the kitchen.

There was a scuffle overhead, followed by a heavy fall. Then two young men came running down the steps.

Dick Worth and Lionel Lacey!

In an instant they had thrown themselves upon Cranch, and forced him to release his hold upon the young detective.

In another instant the big ruffian was wearing a pair of handcuffs, and after being disarmed, was left, with Steely Williams, whose dirk and other weapons had also been removed, in the cellar.

The door was carefully barred and locked, and everybody save the two ruffians went into the kitchen. Mag Mullins, who was not dangerously hurt, was allowed to come up too, but Dan put a pair of handcuffs on her wrists to make sure of her.

"What, mynheer—you here?" exclaimed Dan, as he entered the kitchen.

"Yaw! I thought I would come," returned the Dutchman, stolidly.

He was sitting in a big arm-chair, his short clay pipe in full blast, and a large navy revolver in his hand, ready for business.

"We told mynheer where we were going," explained Lionel. We had just heard from Con where this man Wilfred Noel—or Steely Williams, as I understand he calls himself—was likely to be, and we came to have some fun. Dick Worth has a bone to pick with him, I believe."

"Yaw, so I just come along."

"Well, I'm very glad to see you," said Dan, heartily.

The tale is nearly told.

Steely Williams, alias Wilfred Noel, was placed in the Tombs to await his trial for the murder of young Robert Hetherington. The career of the prisoner was laid bare, and it was shown that he had committed several burglaries besides those at the bank. He was tried and sentenced to be hanged, but died three days before the time fixed for his execution. The physicians said pneumonia, but there are many who believe that he managed to smuggle poison into his cell by the aid of some of his pals who were allowed to see him. He died in the night, before the death-watch could summon assistance.

Bill Cranch and Mag Mullins were both sentenced to terms in Sing Sing Prison for their part in the abduction of Mr. Hetherington. No other specific crimes could be traced to either, but the authorities will keep them under surveillance at the expiration of their sentences.

Mynheer Van der Straten and Lionel Lacey are great friends. Whenever the schooner De Ruyter is in New York Harbor, Lionel spends a large portion of his time aboard. Perhaps the bright eyes of Lisa Van der Straten have something to do with the young man's constant visits.

Dick Worth left the New Yorks after the death of Wilfred Noel. It turned out that the latter was his cousin, and that the fact of his being the son of Dick's father's sister was the cause of his delinquencies in the club being so leniently treated by the captain. Bad as Wilfred Noel was, the ties of relationship were strong, and Dick felt as if he could not play in the club any longer after the terrible circumstances with which it was now associated in his mind.

The valuable papers and money stolen from the Hetherington bank were all recovered, being found in Mag Mullins's capacious pocket. The lawsuit involving the right of Ada to so much valuable property in New York was won by her, and she is now one of the richest youngwomen in the metropolis.

Double-Curve Dan still plays ball occasionally, though he is not regularly attached to a club. He has done much valuable work for the Secret Ser-

vice since he hunted down the murderer of young Hetherington and brought a notorious criminal to justice at the same time. He plays ball as a pastime, but feels that the real business of his life lies in sterner channels.

He is a constant and welcome guest at the house of Robert Hetherington, Esq., and the proud banker looks not unkindly upon the evident regard felt by his daughter Ada for the brave young detective. There will be a wedding on Murray Hill before long, and the high contracting parties will be Miss Ada Hetherington, daughter of Robert Hetherington, Esq., and Mr. Daniel Manly.

There is a handsome monument above a quiet grave in Woodlawn Cemetery, in which sleeps all that is mortal of a bright young boy, cut down in the flush of youth by a coward's hand. Inscribed on the white marble is simply the name of Robert Hetherington, with the dates of his birth and death, but many who look at the grave and read the inscription could tell the story so well known in New York, that the death of the lad was promptly and terribly avenged by the manly young detective, Double-Curve Dan.

THE END.

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